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LIGHTS IN PRAYER

QUARTERLY SERIES. VOLUME EIGHTY-SIX.

THE

LIGHTS IN PRAYER

OF

THE VENERABLE FATHERS

LOUIS DE LA PUENTE

CLAUDE DE LA COLOMBIÈRE

AND

THE REV. FATHER PAUL SEGNERI

ALL OF THE SOCIETY OF JESUS

John Morris, Editor

DOMINE · MEMENTO · MEI · CUM · VENERIS · IN · REGNUM · TUUM

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PREFACE.

GOD speaks at all times to His chosen servants, but there is no occasion when His voice is heard so distinctly or moves the heart so tenderly as in retreat. To the loving and faithful soul the Spirit of God says: "I will lead her into the wilderness, and I will speak to her heart" (Osee ii. 14). From all mental prayer the soul comes forth, like Moses, *a consortio sermonis Domini*, "from the conversation of the Lord" (Exod. xxxiv. 29). What the morning meditation is to the day, that and much more the annual retreat is to the twelvemonth—much more, for retreat is the time of the divine predilection, when God condescends to hold His closest and sweetest communion with the soul. Then it is that progress is made in the spiritual life, not only by slow and steady steps, but sometimes, and even frequently, by leaps and bounds. God speaks, and His servant hears, for the distractions of worldly cares are put away for the time, and the still small

Voice is audible in the quiet days of solitude and separation from the world. The word so heard is attractive to the heart, and at the time it seems to be easily fulfilled; but when the retreat is over, "the cares and riches and pleasures of this life," though they may not like the thorns of the parable, altogether choke the good seed, certainly hinder its growth; and thus the knowledge of God's word to the soul becomes dim, and the will to fulfil it becomes feebler than when, in time of retreat, it came clear and fresh and bright from the Orient on high.

To keep the memory distinct, and by its help to keep the will from flagging, holy men have accustomed themselves to write down what the Spirit of God has inspired into their souls in prayer. St. Francis Xavier highly recommended the practice of recording these lights, as they are aptly called, and he said that they were like to burning coals taken from the altar of God, which retain their power in after times of rekindling the divine flame. These lights have all the freshness of novelty, but the mysteries which they enlighten are nothing new. A special ray from heaven has shone on the ancient truths, for the benefit, in the first place and above all, of the individual soul in its intercourse with God, and, through that soul, for the benefit of other souls that come within the range of its apostolic influence.

What the morning meditation is to the day, that and more is a retreat to the year. And what the retreat is to the year in which it is made, that and much more should the long retreat of a full month be to the lifetime of those who are privileged to make it. When the Exercises of St. Ignatius were first given to the Church, this was the usual term given to them by those that made them; and they retain, even when made only for eight days, the division into weeks by which their parts are currently known. It is rare in our time for any one who is not a member of the Society of Jesus, or of a Congregation that has taken its Rules from the Society, to make the thirty days' retreat, but it is not quite unknown even for seculars to do so. One of the means employed by God to prepare our most holy Father and Lord, Pope Leo XIII., for the august office that His Divine Majesty destined him to fill, was this. His heart was moved, at the time of his ordination to the priesthood, to give this token of his earnestness in the service of God, and he made the Exercises in full, spending a whole month immersed in them. A month so spent must have given a colour to the thoughts and a bias to the will that would be deepened, rather than effaced, by the apostolic labours of a long life.

The long retreat comes twice in the career of a Jesuit. The first time is in his noviceship, and its result is to transform the school-boy or the man of the world into the novice. It has its own work to do, and it does it; but the effect on the immature or untrained mind, though lasting, does not leave that intimate knowledge of the Exercises and that full insight into their meaning that is the result of the long retreat when made in the tertianship. The course of studies is then complete, and the mind has been ripened and trained by teaching as well as by learning. Those who thus make the month's retreat for the second and last time in their lives, have but lately attained to the priesthood, which for ten years or more they have put before themselves as the great object of their desires. Before they go forth to put into use the lofty powers thus conferred upon them, and before they make their last vows in the Society to which they have been called, they pass through a third year of novitiate, which is one of the boons they owe to the provident care of their father St. Ignatius. The chiefest of precious helps of that time of renovation of spirit, and that breathing time which serves as a new start in their religious and apostolic career, is the month's retreat. Everything is in their favour. Usually at about the age of our Divine Redeemer at His Passion, the young Jesuit priest in his tertianship has on him the fervour produced by the slow approach of the priesthood and its recent glorious attainment, and he has before him the apostolic life, now close at hand. He is at his best, and St. Ignatius avails himself of these dispositions to bring him face to face with God in prayer, hour after hour, day by day for a full month. We may well conceive how great would be the effect of such a retreat under such circumstances upon a soul as ready to correspond with grace as was each one of the Servants of God, who have here made record of God's goodness to them.

Those who are desirous of counsel and guidance in the spiritual life will welcome the book that is now placed in their hands. It brings before them the inspirations and the aspirations, the lights and the graces of three very holy men, penned for their own soul's sake, to preserve unimpaired their memory of God's good pleasure respecting them. What has helped them, will help, and has helped others. A Spaniard, a Frenchman, and an Italian here reveal the workings of the grace of God within them. Crumbs from their table there are sure to be, well adapted to our own needs; and we shall get lights for our guidance and strength for our assistance from that which was so freely bestowed upon them. It is good for us to see how much some have drawn from the sources that are open to ourselves, and our hearts will be moved to a holy emulation in correspondence with the graces that God always bountifully bestows in time of retreat.

Two of these works have been published in English before this, but they have long been out of print. The present translation of all three is from the same hand, and in each case it has been made direct from the language in which it was originally written. To that hand we owe the translation into English of the *Spirit of St. Ignatius*, which has already been published, and I venture in this place to express my obligations for the diligent labour with which that volume and this have been prepared for the use of English readers.

JOHN MORRIS, S.J.

31 FARM STREET, LONDON, W.
31*st July*, 1893.

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SPIRITUAL THOUGHTS AND LIGHTS

OF THE

VENERABLE FATHER LOUIS DE LA PUENTE

OF THE SOCIETY OF JESUS

LOUIS DE LA PUENTE, a Spanish Jesuit, is better known in France by the name of Du Pont, and in Italy by that of De Ponte. By this last form of the name he has been made known to English Catholics by the translators of his admirable meditations. He was born at Valladolid on the 11th of November, 1554, and on the 2nd of December, 1574, he was admitted into the Society of Jesus. After teaching philosophy and theology for a time, his weak health compelled him to desist, and the rest of his life was devoted to the training of novices and the composition of spiritual books. He died at Valladolid in the odour of sanctity on the 17th of February, 1624. The virtues of this Venerable Servant of God were declared heroic by the Sacred Congregation of Rites on the 16th of July, 1759, and all that is now wanting for his solemn beatification is the approbation of the necessary miracles.

The book here translated for the first time into English, was published at Seville in the year 1671 by Father Thyrsus Gonzalez, who was afterwards General of the Society of Jesus. The manuscript from which he printed it was entirely in the handwriting of the Venerable Louis de la Puente. The little book has been translated into Latin, Italian, and Flemish. The two last-mentioned translations were published in 1690 and 1692.

SPIRITUAL THOUGHTS AND LIGHTS

OF THE

VENERABLE FATHER LOUIS DE LA PUENTE

OF THE SOCIETY OF JESUS.

INTRODUCTION.[1]

AFTER the death of the Venerable Father Louis de la Puente, a book was found amongst his papers with the following title: *Memorandum of certain good and evil affections which I have experienced, and do experience in myself, in order to humble myself on account of the large amount of evil I find in me, and to encourage myself by the recollection of the good which I have felt, if such there has been.*

Under this humble title, which indicates nothing supernatural nor extraordinary, he has left us written down the lights, discourses and thoughts, with which the Holy Spirit illumined his soul, not for his own profit only, but for that of others also; for, God having chosen him to be a great mystical doctor, and master of the spiritual life in His Church, He raised him to that high degree of contemplation which was fitting in order to teach others, so that he might leave the understanding enriched with new truths and reasonings, or with similitudes and sensible comparisons for the explanation of them. In these thoughts the master in spirituality will find much light, and those who are favoured by God with His familiar intercourse, will meet with a deep observation of the inward dispositions of the soul, much teaching for the exercise of all the virtues, great delicacy of mind, together with the most ardent affections, which, illuminating the understanding of those who read attentively, will, at the same time, inflame the will.

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[1] This Introduction is to be found in the edition of the *Spiritual Works* of the Venerable Father Luis de la Puente, Madrid, 1690, vol. v. page 217, and is taken from the Dedication to Don Ambrosio de Espinola y Guzman, Archbishop of Seville, which was placed by Father Thyrsus Gonzalez at the beginning of that edition of the *Thoughts and Lights*.

SPIRITUAL THOUGHTS AND LIGHTS

I. DIVINE LIGHT.

1. For many days I have had the most fervent desires for light from heaven, which light I have regarded as the source of all blessings; by light I mean a knowledge which God bestows in such a manner as to undeceive the understanding, and move the will. I have made frequent ejaculations to God: *Emitte lucem tuam*:[1] "Send forth Thy light." *O lux beatissima, reple cordis intima animae meae.*[2] *Illumina oculos meos, revela oculos meos*:[3] "Enlighten my eyes." Lord, send me Thy light, and since Thou art light by essence, illuminate me with its rays, communicating them to my eyes and my heart.

II. OBEDIENCE.

2. These desires produce in me two good affections: first, obedience, because I understood that God bestows this light upon His friends who are obedient, as Job says: *Annuntiat de ea amico suo*:[4] "He showeth His friend concerning it." I resolved to endeavour to obey with the

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[1] Psalm xlii. 3

[2] *Hymn. eccl.*

[3] Psalm xii. 4.

[4] Job xxxvi. 33.

greatest exactness: first, the precepts, not for the whole world to commit deliberately a venial sin; secondly, in the observance of the rules, common as well as particular; thirdly, the spoken orders of the superiors; fourthly, to accept the events which God sends, in the form in which He wishes me to accept them. We ought to obey these three kinds of superiors: first, men who are in the place of God; secondly, natural reason, which is God's vicar, obeying its dictates; thirdly, God in His inward inspirations. I was much encouraged to this by the consideration that God rules me: *Dominus regit me, et nihil mihi deerit*:[1] "The Lord ruleth me: and I shall want nothing." Also by the words of Isaias: *Ego Dominus Deus tuus, docens te utilia, et gubernans te in via, qua ambulas. Utinam attendisses mandata mea! Facta esset sicut fluvius pax tua, et justitia tua sicut gurgites maris*:[2] "I am the Lord thy God that teach thee profitable things, that govern thee in the way that thou walkest. O that thou hadst hearkened to My commandments: thy peace had been as a river, and thy justice as the waves of the sea." And in the Psalms: *Inquirentes autem Deum, non minuentur omni bono*:[3] "They that seek the Lord shall not be deprived of any good." I had particular thoughts concerning each of these verses. If God rules me I can want nothing; He tells me that He is my God, and that He will teach me and direct me in the perfect way. He says: O soul, if thou dost

[1] Psalm xxii. 1. [2] Isaias xlviii. 17, 18. [3] Psalm xxxiii. 11.

keep My commandments thou wilt have peace and justice as a full river. Those who seek God lose nothing.

III. HUMILITY.

3. The other affection was a great love of humility, because God gives this light to the humble: *Intellectum dat parvulis: revelasti ea parvulis*:[1] "The declaration of Thy words giveth light: and giveth understanding to little ones." *Nisi efficiamini sicut parvuli, non intrabitis in regnum coelorum*:[2] "Unless you be converted, and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." He gives understanding to the little ones, He reveals to them His mysteries, and we shall not enter into heaven unless we become like children. I had particular light and feeling on this point. It seemed to me almost impossible to attain to such a degree of humility as to deem myself little, to wish to be thought nothing of, and not to have honourable appointments assigned to me. One day, after Mass, a light flashed into my mind, which discovered to me that it was possible to arrive at this degree of humility. I was much encouraged thereby, and hope that what was shown to me to be possible will be granted to me, which desire continues to increase.

4. The other day, in meditation, I had another flash of light, which showed me that I am God's

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[1] Psalm cxviii. 130.

[2] St. Matt. xviii. 3.

instrument in the works that He performs (*salva libertate*), so that as the instrument cannot of itself either move or perform any work, in like manner I, of myself, am nothing, am worth nothing, and can do nothing; if God uses my powers I shall work well, if He lets me alone there will be nothing but blemishes. I continued this exercise of self-knowledge for more than six months, with various thoughts and many comparisons, such as the following: *Numquid gloriabitur securis contra eum, qui secat in ea?*[1] "Shall the axe boast itself against him that cutteth with it?" The vine and the branches: *Ego sum vitis, vos palmites; sicut palmes non potest ferre fructum a semetipso*, etc.:[2] "I am the vine; you the branches," etc. A pen or pencil: *Lingua mea calamus scribae*:[3] "My tongue is the pen of a scrivener." Does the axe glory against him who cuts with it? I am the vine, you the branches, and as they cannot bear fruit of themselves, neither can men, unless they abide in God. My tongue is only the pen of a scrivener that writeth swiftly. A child in the arms of a mother, if not fed, will die of hunger, if not washed, will be filthy, if not held, will fall to the ground; and so I recognized my own littleness in a special manner.

5. Hence I educed various affections: first, love to God, because, looking at my own nothingness and seeing that all we have is from Him, this inflamed my heart to love Him, and

[1] Isaias x. 15.

[2] St. John xv. 4, 5.

[3] Psalm xliv. 2.

showed me how humility and self-knowledge are the beginning of love to God; secondly, a desire to glorify God in all things, concluding each devotion with the versicle, *Gloria Patri*, etc.; purposing that in the course of the day every good work may be to His glory, since it is entirely His, and that I will humble and abase myself for whatever is evil; thirdly, greater courage and confidence in virtue, which seems to me to follow from depending on God for all good things; first, because He is a better guardian of them than I could be: *Qui potens est depositum meum servare*:[1] "He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him." God alone is mighty to guard my good works, like a poor person who, possessing a precious jewel, gives it into the care of a powerful man to be kept. Secondly, that I shall obtain in greater abundance and more quickly than I should do if I depended on my own powers, since God is liberal: *Qui dat omnibus affluenter*: "Who giveth to all men abundantly." Thirdly, resignation, as possessing no power, and not having to be moved by my will in anything.

6. The light which I have mentioned appears to me to possess these properties: first, it comes suddenly, when one thinks not of it, and at different times, and in various exercises; secondly, it comes like a flash of lightning, which shows much in a short time, and without argument induces a strong belief in what you have

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[1] 2 Tim. i. 12.

seen. To use a natural comparison, the difference is the same as between writing letter after letter with a pen, or drawing a picture little by little with a pencil, and making the impression in a moment with a mould or stamp, which does it much better and produces a much more perfect image than can be done in the former manner. Thirdly, it inflames the will with love for the truth which it reveals, and though it is of short duration, there remains in the understanding an enlightenment which shows itself in new discourses and meditations, which keeps us absorbed all day, and for days, especially in comparisons taken from Scripture, and from sensible things, in the manner which I have described. We find this in St. Bernard, Serm. 40, *in Cantica*, on the words *Murenulas aureas*, etc.

7. I ask this light from our Lord in order to know the following things well: first, who God is, and His greatness, especially His presence everywhere; secondly, who Christ is, and His riches, especially His presence in the Blessed Sacrament; thirdly, who I am, and my own worthlessness; fourthly, what the world is, and the vanity of worldly things, honour, etc.; fifthly, what souls are, and their value; sixthly, the benefits which we have received from God, and hope to receive; seventhly, the evils and punishments which are to be feared; eighthly, to know His will. It seems to me that our Lord must give this light sometimes in order to know one of His attributes, sometimes to know another, now

His omnipotence, and again His liberality, etc. At one time He gives light to ponder one mystery of Christ, and on a different occasion another, *et sic de aliis*. This light sometimes comes suddenly, like a flash of lightning, at others gradually, without our knowing how it enters into our thoughts and meditations. The eight points which I have mentioned serve as heads for all meditations and affections, all meditation reduces itself to these, and in pondering them are produced all the affections of love, thanksgiving, praise, humility, obedience, patience, etc.

IV. THE KNOWLEDGE OF OUR OWN UNWORTHINESS.

8. Amongst all the thoughts and truths with which I am acquainted, one that has profited me much in adversity and in prosperity, is the consciousness of my unworthiness, deeming myself truly unworthy of all the gifts which I possess, or do not possess, and repeating this to myself whilst using any. I am unworthy of the light by which I see; of the air which I breathe; of the water which I drink; of the bread which I eat; of the clothing which covers me, etc. I am unworthy of spiritual light; of all consolation and tears, etc. Unworthy to behold God; unworthy to dwell in this world amongst men; unworthy to enter purgatory, the prison-house of the noble; unworthy to eat the bread of the children of God. I deserve toil, scorn and

suffering; I deserve to be in hell, at the feet of Lucifer. I deserve darkness and aridity. From this thought arises a readiness to suffer all trials, interior as well as exterior, without any complaint, and a promptness to resist all vain and proud thoughts. It assists me especially when I am assailed by such thoughts or am likely to be so.

9. At other times I feel, as it were, floating in the air, sustained by God, like the bright light of the sun. This light is not established in the air, but comes each day from the sun; in like manner it descends upon me daily in prayer, in obedience, etc. Sometimes I seem to be before God like a stupid beast, thoughtless and incapable of meditating, or of entertaining one good thought, devoid of all that is profitable. Sometimes I am like a faithless and rebellious slave, the property of God, to do His bidding, etc. A slave is the lowest person in the house; he has the worst of everything, clothes, lodging, food, employment, etc.; he deems himself unworthy of the favours bestowed upon the sons, or of the bread given to them; he is obedient to all, and at the command of all; this is what I consider I deserve. *O Domine, quia ego servus tuus, servus tuus, et filius ancillae tuae*:[1] "O Lord, for I am Thy servant: I am Thy servant, and the son of Thy handmaid." Realising this, by the light from heaven, I see my soul free from many affections for position, honour, gifts,

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[1] Psalm lxv. 16.

vices, etc. Therefore David said: *Dirupisti vincula mea*, etc.:[1] "Thou hast broken my bonds."

10. From these thoughts I gained at various times the following lights: First, to endeavour to fulfil God's will by my service, since from Him must proceed all good gifts, walking with exactness and perfection in the way of ordinary obedience. Secondly, when we have fulfilled God's will with all possible perfection, to understand that He is not our Debtor, to bestow upon us in justice these spiritual gifts of illuminations, thoughts, affections and tears, which God gives to whom He wills, and as He wills: *Dicite: servi inutiles sumus*:[2] "Say: we are unprofitable servants." Thirdly, when, after I have done God's will, He treats me severely and coldly, I ought not to be angry nor discouraged, because God is treating me as I deserve, and it is enough that He chooses to do so. Fourthly, I ought to be convinced of the grievousness of my secret sins, God being most liberal and magnificent, whilst I am so poor, for certainly nothing was wanting to God. Fifthly, I ought to consider the worthlessness of my works, so full of imperfection, which improve so little, though they ought to be most efficacious, such as prayer, Mass, obedience, etc., so many channels to receive abundantly. Sixthly, I ought to believe that God bestows precious spiritual gifts upon many persons in the house where I am, chiefly upon other religious, though I do not see them, and this

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[1] Psalm cxv. 17.

[2] St. Luke xvii. 10.

represses secret pride and a wish to shine, keeping one humble before all. Seventhly, comparing my secret sins with the hidden gifts of others, I ought to humble myself before all, considering myself the least of all; I often appear to myself to be amongst those in the house as a raven amongst doves, and that the doves have recourse to the raven for advice and direction. Eighthly, I imagine myself to be like a man whose body is covered with ulcers, an ugly sack, from the movements of which proceed unpleasant odours; the imagination, the memory, the understanding, the will, the appetite and the senses, are ulcerated with every kind of leprosy, cancer and poison; and these mingle with every work somewhat of pride, self-interest, negligence, dis-esteem of others, self-will, or inconstancy, etc. Also I often close my eyes so as to make no comparison with others, like a child or animal which does not compare itself with any: *Ut jumentum factus sum*, etc.:[1] "I am become as a beast before Thee;" so as to feel that I am worse than the devils, more ungrateful than they are, and fit to be cast beneath their feet; and amongst other reasons, one is, that the coming of Christ, His Passion and Death, His Body and Blood, have been for me and not for them. I am worse, and more unworthy than they are, since I am ungrateful for the greatest gift which God has bestowed upon men and not upon angels. With this consideration, that I am worse than the devils, and that hell should be my abode, I armed myself against the movements of pride, etc., and I said with Job: *Quis mihi det, ut in inferno protegas me?*[1] "Who will grant me this, that Thou mayest protect me in hell?"

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[1] Psalm lxxii. 23.

V. THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD.

11. God is my Father, Mother, Master, Tutor, Shepherd, Governor: *Dominus regit me, nihil mihi deerit:*[2] "The Lord ruleth me: and I shall want nothing." This affords me much consolation; God knows, and He can and will give me whatever is good for me. If such an office or success is not good for me, why do I desire it? If it is good for me, God will order it so, whilst I fulfil my obligations tranquilly. It is through God's Providence that I go to such a college, with a certain rector, to be with certain persons, to fill such an office or offices; if I trust in God, all will go well.

12. It should be my care, in the office which is entrusted to me, of lecturer, preacher, superior, etc., to satisfy the thought that God has of me, Who knows my faults and incapacity, and not what I wish men to think of me, or imagine that they think of me; since from this arise heart-burnings, vanity, sadness and numberless imperfections, and God does not require from me more than I can with goodwill perform. On my part, I should wish for the contempt and disesteem

[1] Job xiv. 13.

[2] Psalm xxii. 1.

of men, trusting in God's Providence, knowing that He will not fail to give me the honour necessary to fill my office well.

13. I must endeavour to accept willingly all the troubles and vexations which come, for none is by chance, and if I use them well, they will all turn to my good. The occasions and sources of suffering are these: first, the bodily necessities, such as hunger, thirst, sleep, infirmities, sadness, fatigue; secondly, injury from irrational creatures; from climate, such as cold, heat, wet, drought; from animals, such as the stings of mosquitoes, fleas, etc.; from falls, stumbling, blows, etc.; thirdly, spiritual necessities, such as aridity, ignorance, involuntary distractions, weakness of understanding and of memory, faults in language and in reasoning, passions, evil inclinations; fourthly, the temptations of the devil who wishes to tempt us in every possible manner, in the flesh and in the spirit, in the imagination, by sensuality, or in the understanding; fifthly, from various kinds of persons, the choleric, the phlegmatic, the melancholy, etc.; injuries proceeding from them, dishonour, contempt, hatred, etc.; sixthly, calamities in the Church and in the state, in religion, in the city and in the college, in friends, etc. I ought to suffer all this with resignation to Divine Providence.

VI. THE PRESENCE OF GOD.

14. I have experienced the presence of God in various ways, both in prayer, and outside it. Sometimes I seem to see myself in God's presence, not with my bodily eyes, nor clearly, and not in discourse only, but in a special manner, my soul being immediately before Him, as one to whom He is speaking, and whose eyes and understanding are open; there is then much greater fervour and attention. It is as if, when with another person, if the light be extinguished, and all be quiet, without seeing or hearing him, or being aware of any bodily movement, we converse with him as present. This appears to be what St. Dionysius means when he says: *Intra in divinam caliginem*: to enter the divine obscurity, because we are, as it were, with God in darkness. In the same way we recognize the presence of our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar with much liveliness of feeling; we remain united with Him, but without forming a particular conception of anything besides His presence; and although this feeling only lasts for a short time, yet the faith by which we have experienced it afterwards remains more lively.

15. There are three methods of realizing the presence of God in prayer which are real and true, and not imaginary. First, to behold Him as He is in the Blessed Sacrament; this is in the Church alone. Another is, to look at God as

He is in the whole world and where I am, and at myself in Him, as the fishes are in the water, or as a child is in the womb of the mother; He can say: *Qui portamini a meo utero, gestamini a mea vulva*:[1] "Be carried by Me and in Me." Our eyes can then be opened to behold the light, and creatures become no hindrance to us, because we see all things in God: *In ipso enim vivimus, et movemur, et sumus*;[2] *et qui manet in charitate, in Deo manet*:[3] "For in Him we live, and move, and are;" "he that abideth in charity, abideth in God." The third method is, to look at our Lord as He is in me, for He is in reality in me and in all others, by essence, and presence, and power: *Tu autem in nobis es, Deus*;[4] *et qui manet in charitate, in Deo manet et Deus in eo*:[5] "Thou, O Lord, art among us;" "he that abideth in charity, abideth in God, and God in him." It sometimes happens, almost inadvertently, that, if we shut our eyes and concentrate all our powers in the interior, we find ourselves close to God, conversing with Him, and united to Him. This method is well calculated to promote union with God, and to draw forth affections of joy and trust, at the view of the greatness of what the soul contains.

16. Three kinds of acts conduce to this realization of the presence of God: first, acts of faith, meditation, reasoning, and simple understanding of the presence of God everywhere, and in my-

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[1] Isaias xlvi. 3. [2] Acts xvii. 28. [3] St. John iv. 16.
[4] Jeremias xiv. 9. [5] 1 St. John iv. 16.

self; secondly, petition; because when we ask anything from another, it implies that he is present, since we can neither converse with nor petition one who is absent; thirdly, affections of love, joy, praise, etc. This is the highest way, because nothing is more present to another than when united and cemented with it.

17. At other times I am consoled by the presence of God, imagining myself within an omnipotence which encircles heaven and earth, from which proceeds the plenitude of all blessings to me and to all creatures, according to those words in the Psalms: *Introibo in potentias Domini, et memorabor justitiae tuae solius*:[1] "I will enter into the powers of the Lord: O Lord, I will be mindful of Thy justice alone." Being God, He is essentially omnipotent: *Omnipotens Pater, omnipotens Filius, omnipotens Spiritus Sanctus*:[2] "The Father is almighty, the Son almighty, and the Holy Ghost almighty." My soul delights in rejoicing in this omnipotence, and in adoring it: *Omnipotens nomen ejus*:[3] "Almighty is His name." Other omnipotence, by participation in a most excellent way, has Christ our Lord, God and Man: *Data est mihi omnis potestas in coelo et in terra*;[4] *et sciens quia omnia dedit ei Pater in manus*.[5] "All power is given to Me in heaven and in earth;" "knowing that the Father had given Him all things into His hands." The just,

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[1] Psalm lxx. 16.

[2] *Ex Symbol S. Athanasii.*

[3] Exodus xv. 3.

[4] St. Matt. xxviii. 18.

[5] St. John xiii. 3.

who are perfect, have yet another by participation, as St. Paul, who says: *Omnia possum in eo, qui me confortat*:[1] "I can do all things in Him Who strengtheneth me." All omnipotence by participation flows from union with God; as the omnipotence of the Son and of the Holy Ghost is received from the Father by the union in one essence, so the omnipotence of Christ comes from the union with the Word, and that of the just in union with God by knowledge and perfect love. As the iron in the fire partakes in the power and activity of the fire, so does the soul, united with God, share in the omnipotence of God. This is the case with the just, who can say with David: *Introibo in potentias Domini*:[2] "I will enter into the powers of the Lord."

18. There are three ways of entering into the powers of God: first, by speculative knowledge, meditation, and reason of the understanding alone; this is for the learned, therefore it is not of this that David speaks when he says: *Quoniam non cognovi litteraturam, introibo in potentias Domini*:[3] "Because I have not known learning, I will enter into the powers of the Lord." Unless the learned become like little children, the simple and unlearned, they will not enter into the powers of God. There is a second way of entering by knowledge, and this is more than speculative, and less than experimental of this omnipotence; it is a knowledge by means of lively faith of the

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[1] Philip. iv. 13.

[2] Psalm lxx. 16.

[3] *Ibid.* 15, 16.

ease with which the omnipotence of God can enter within me, and act upon my powers as is needed, understanding in a special manner those words of the Wise Man: *Facile est in oculis Domini subito honestare pauperem:*[1] "For it is easy in the eyes of God on a sudden to make the poor man rich." Note that word *subito*, it is easy for God to enrich the poor man suddenly, that is, when he expects it least; his soul is meek and is what God wishes for, he longs for His coming, and in return God unites him with Himself. The third way is by experimental knowledge; for it appears to me that it is a different thing to experience in oneself the omnipotence of God, and to experience union with the omnipotence of God. The first is to experience in myself the effects of this omnipotence, such as sudden tranquillity of the imagination and memory in the midst of much business, sudden illumination of the understanding after much error and darkness, sudden peace after a fierce war with temptations, a change in the will, so as to love what shortly before we hated, or to hate what we lately loved, etc.: *Certamen forte dedit illi, ut vinceret, et ut cognosceret quoniam omnium potentior est sapientia:*[2] "And gave him a strong conflict, that he might overcome, and know [by experience] that wisdom is mightier than all." From this I ascend to the second, which should be something indescribable; when a soul, conscious of this union with Divine Omnipotence, feels in itself a greatness so as to perform in God things heroic, such as to suffer the severest trials. This Job foresaw when he said: *Pone me juxta te, et cujusvis manus pugnet contra me*:[1] "Set me beside Thee, and let any man's hand fight against me." All power is inferior to that which I possess in Thy presence, assisted by Thy grace. He knew this who said: *In Deo meo transgrediar murum*:[2] "Through my God I shall go over a wall;" because he felt such courage in God, that he called Him *fortitudo mea*. He who attains to this can say: *Memorabor justitiae tuae solius*:[3] "I will be mindful of Thy justice alone." Grant, Lord, that I may have no other thought, no other wish than Thy will, and so partake of the magnanimity and strength of God.

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[1] Eccl. xi. 23.

[2] Wisdom x. 12.

19. One who is such participates in the omnipotence of every virtue; his prayer is omnipotent to obtain from God what he asks; his obedience is omnipotent to perform whatever he is commanded; his patience is omnipotent to suffer all the trials that arise; so also are his charity, his zeal, his strength, etc. May it please Thy omnipotence, Almighty God, that we may have much of this omnipotence in Thy Church! O my soul, if thou dost desire to enter into the powers of thy God, it must be by the path of humiliations, esteeming thyself and wishing to be esteemed as ignorant and worthless, so as to say with David: *Quoniam non cognovi litteraturam, introibo in potentias Domini*:[4] "Because I have not known learning, I will enter

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[1] Job xvii. 3.
[2] Psalm xvii. 30.
[3] *Ibid.* lxx. 16.
[4] Psalm lxx. 16.

into the powers of the Lord." And with St. Bernard: *Nulla res hic clariorem reddit omnipotentiam Verbi, quam quod omnipotentes facit sperantes in se*:[1] "Nothing brings greater credit to the omnipotence of the Word than that those who hope in His Majesty should become omnipotent."

VII. UNION WITH GOD.

20. I spent much time in considering these three truths which our Lord made known to St. Catherine of Siena, entertaining various thoughts and affections concerning each of them. First, I am, says God, Who I am, and thou art what thou art not; secondly, take the sweet things of this life for bitter, and the bitter for sweet; thirdly, take care of Me, and I will take care of thee.

21. From this I deduced principally, that if I am what is not, it behoves me greatly to be united to what is, and then will come into my soul all good gifts, and all for which we ought to value existence; this increased my longing for the divine union. At another time it seemed to me that, God being united with me in order to work, we were no longer two, but one (like the soul and the body, *seclusa informatione*); because we are so much one that I never set about any work without God doing so with me; and even when it is a work of sin, according to nature, God does not deny me His concurrence. Hence I see how I ought to hate

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[1] Serm. 87, *in Cantic.*

sin, so as not to force (*si licet ita loqui*) God, Who is so good, to concur in an act by which I displease Him, and in order not to make use of this divine union to gain God's concurrence *etiam in minimis peccatis,* even in the least sin. God is the plenitude of all good, I am the plenitude of evil: the fulness of one casts out the other; plenitude of pride and self-love casts out the plenitude of God, and the plenitude of God casts forth from the soul all pride and self-love. *Res tremenda!* Awful thought, all are within the plenitude of God, for God encircles heaven and earth, and His plenitude is within all, yet it does not fill all, because many remain empty. The soul which is filled with this plenitude in the memory, the understanding, and the will, admits neither thoughts nor affections which are contrary to God, they have no place there, for it is already full. Christ brought this fulness to earth, and since His coming it has been said of many that *erant pleni gratia, pleni Spiritu Sancto;* full of grace, full of the Holy Ghost. Before the Gospel, I do not read of this plenitude in others. I went on with this for several days, begging our Lord to give me this plenitude of blessings, the plenitude of God.

22. God is a fire of love, which enlightens, inflames, and consumes. I imagined myself within this divine fire, and this divine fire in its sphere like the material elements. One sphere is uncreated, the other created. The uncreated sphere is the Divinity, and is as extensive as God; God is fire, and all is full of God; it is then all full of fire,

in fire we live and move, bright blazes of this fire are all creatures, elements, birds, fishes, &c. We are all encircled with flames of fire; how is it that we do not burn? O divine fire, come, burn, inflame my soul, and consume whatever in it separates me from Thee.

23. The created sphere is the humanity of Christ our Lord; His heart is a fiery furnace; from five openings the flames proceed. By these we may enter, and they are the five Wounds: the wound in His side goes straight to His heart. In this fire burn the Pope, the Cardinals, the Archbishops, Bishops, Priests, Generals and Provincials, Priors and Guardians, Preachers and Superiors, Rectors and Confessors, students, novices and religious, also Kings and Princes, Governors, Judges and all seculars. In it burn Jews and Gentiles, Moors, heretics and bad Christians; it consumes all sin in them, enlightens all ignorance, and inflames them with love for their Creator. O my soul, like the salamander, thou livest in this infinite fire, but art not consumed therein, thy passions remaining strong and flourishing! O my soul, if like the phenix thou wast to burn in this fire, esteeming thyself but ashes and worms, thou wouldst arise renewed in God!

24. It seemed to me that my weakness in all that is good, is infinite, and also my power for evil. What greater weakness in good can there be than to be incapable of anything good? What greater power for evil than to be able to desire all that is evil, and to be able to resist the omnipotent fire? My God and my all, change this, make my weak-

ness for that which is evil infinite, and my power for good infinite; unite me with the Omnipotent and I shall be omnipotent in it and by it.

25. I asked our Lord repeatedly for four things, and desire always to make this petition: first, divine light by which to know Him, to know myself, and the things which pertain to my office; secondly, ardent love to Him, free from all self-interest and spiritual delight; thirdly, great hatred of myself, of honour and gifts, and love of the cross, sufferings, and contempt; fourthly, ardent zeal for His glory, and for the salvation of souls. I commit these to four saints, one to each of them, and I say some prayer daily for this end: I commit the first to the Blessed Virgin; the second to Saint Joseph; the third to Saint John the Baptist; the fourth to Saint Paul and to my Guardian Angel, that they may obtain them for me from God. I sometimes imagined my Guardian Angel to be at my right hand and myself having recourse to him in the necessities and distractions of prayer. I said to him: My Angel, either God is ready that you should enlighten and inflame me with love to Him or not; if He is ready, why do you not do it? If He is not, ask Him that you may have leave to do so, which if His Majesty bestows you may do much.

26. I have experienced four evil inclinations in my spiritual exercises: first, vanity, desiring to be considered spiritual by others; secondly, curiosity, desiring to know the thoughts of God, and to have illuminations, ecstasies, &c., more for the sake of

knowing them by experience than for God's glory; thirdly, spiritual sensuality, desiring pleasure, consolation, tears, and such like things, on account of their sweetness; fourthly, self-interest, desiring in a troubled and anxious manner, progress and improvement, more in order to free myself from the torment consequent upon poverty of spiritual virtues, than for the honour of God.

27. True love to God has four excellent properties, by which it is distinguished from that which is false, and these are opposed to the four inclinations just mentioned: first, true love to God loves and values His glory infinitely more than its own, it has no eyes for the latter, and sets no store by it; secondly, true love to God has a greater desire to love than to know, it values obedience more than knowledge, and if it wishes for knowledge, it is simply in order to love and obey more perfectly; thirdly, true love to God desires more to suffer than to enjoy, to drink the chalice of bitterness rather than of sweetness; fourthly, true love to God has a greater wish to give than to receive, and if it desires to receive gifts from God, it is in order to give Him honour and glory, and to render Him more heroic services. Nevertheless, I do not condemn the intention of serving God for rewards, because it is good, though not the highest.

28. The love of God inclines us first to fly from honours, offices, and prominent employments, and from praise, and if these are forced upon us, to be as it were amongst thorns, and wounded and pricked by them. Secondly, inasmuch as we can-

not always avoid them, and as being pricked in this way causes disturbance, it inclines us to despise them, and to heed them no more than a puff of wind, having clear light to see the vanity and nothingness of what the world calls honour. The world amuses itself with the shadow, neglecting the reality, it enjoys the image, without valuing the thing represented, and this is the case with praise; it should be to us as if it were an idol to which such things are said, and we should heed it no more than we should do if a parrot or a madman said them. Thirdly, to make God's glory our own, so as to esteem nothing honourable except what is to His honour; and if we rejoice in the honour given to Him by His loyal subjects, it is because it honours God, fulfils His will, and furthers their progress.

VIII. THE WILL OF GOD AND THE LOVE OF GOD.

29. *Fiat voluntas tua, sicut in coelo et in terra*:[1] "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." This is the prayer which our Lord wishes us to offer, and it occurred to me one day that it is possible for us to rise so high, and to attain to such perfection in our works, small as they are, such as eating, conversing, praying, teaching, etc. These must be done with the exactness of an angel, or of a man amongst the blessed, if God should command them to do these things; or I must at least have

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[1] St. Matt. vi. 10.

the desire to do so, look how they do them, and rouse myself to imitate them.

30. Especially as to purity of intention in them, aiming simply at God's will in itself, stripping myself of all self-love, and self-interest, temporal and spiritual, esteeming the will of God my highest honour, delight, and interest. I understood the following verse in this sense: *Portio mea, Domine, dixi custodire legem tuam*:[1] "O Lord, my portion, I have said, I would keep Thy law." And also still more appositely: *Haereditate acquisivi testimonia tua in aeternum, quia exultatio cordis mei,* etc.:[2] "I have purchased Thy testimonies for an inheritance for ever: because they are the joy of my heart." For my inheritance, my heaven, my reward, therefore will I obey Thee.

31. Hence I educed various affections: I rejoiced at being a contemptible person, poor of speech, and with other defects, because it is God's will. I rejoiced at enduring temptations, and inward and outward trials, because it is God's will. If it were God's will for me to live a thousand years, overwhelmed with trials, and in interior and exterior darkness, provided I did not offend Him, I should be willing to do so. If it were God's will to punish me with the pains of hell, apart from sin, I am willing. My heaven is the will of God; with it, earth is to me heaven, according to the saying of St. Chrysostom upon these words: *Fiat voluntas tua, sicut in coelo et in terra.*[3] When our Lord

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[1] Psalm cxviii. 57. [2] *Ibid.* 3.
[3] St. Matt. vi. 10.

said: "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," He asked that earth might be made heaven. I also said with David: *Misericordiam, et judicium cantabo tibi, Domine*:[1] "Mercy and judgment I will sing to Thee, O Lord." So also I will sing to God and praise Him, and rejoice in the works of His justice and His mercy. *Complaceo mihi in infirmitatibus meis*:[2] "I please myself in my infirmities." Nevertheless, this does not destroy compassion for the miseries and adversities of others, as I can be sorry for it because it is the suffering of my fellow-creatures, whilst I rejoice in so far as it is the operation of God's justice: *Memor fui judiciorum tuorum a sæculo, et consolatus sum*:[3] "I remembered, O Lord, Thy judgments of old: and I was comforted."

32. From these same words, *Fiat voluntas tua,* etc., I gained power to desire to love God as the Angels and Seraphim love Him, and to desire to fulfil His will as they do. O Seraphim who burn with love to God, admit me to your company, that amongst you I may become inflamed with a love which is ardent, pure, and disinterested! Oh, if the least of your army were to descend with a living coal of this divine fire, and inflame my heart, my tongue, my thoughts, all that I am would become fire by means of this divine love. Oh, that I might be burnt in the fire of trials and contempt until I strip myself and am purified from all created things in order that the fire of Thy love may be more fully

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[1] Psalm c. 1.

[2] 2 Cor. xii. 10.

[3] Psalm cxviii. 52.

kindled in me! O my God, if for Thy glory, and for the conversion of sinners, it should be necessary for me to burn perpetually in the infernal forges, yet without sin, I offer to cast myself into these flames, because the flames of love have freed me from all the flames of the fires and sorrows of this world.

33. I know not which is the greater, the contentment which the souls in purgatory have in burning in that fire, because it is God's will and He requires it, or their suffering at the delay in beholding what they love. In the midst of all these affections I was convinced of my meanness and unworthiness, and I was ashamed of myself. Sometimes I seem ashamed to say to our Lord: I love Thee more than heaven, earth, and the angels, etc. Just as I should be ashamed to say to a friend: I love thee more than a pen or a farthing, etc.; since God is without comparison superior to all that is created, much more than a man is to a pen. From this thought I go on to see the greatness of God and the meanness of creatures; and when I experience this shame and embarrassment, I say: I love Thee, Lord, with all the love of which I am capable, or I love Thee more than all creatures love Thee. I spent much time in meditating, desiring, and asking in prayer, Mass, examens, and through the day, for three things which accompanied Christ our Lord during His whole life, from His birth until His death, namely: *poverty, contempt,* and *suffering,* considering their different parts separately in meditation, so as to

gain affection for them.

34. He was poor in His dwelling, bed, clothes, food, etc.; at His birth, during life, and at death. He was poor in the choice of friends, disciples and kinsmen, and in the trade which He practised for thirty years. He was poor as to honour, as to gifts, poor in His own will, stripping Himself in all this. He was despised, He endured all kind of detriment to His honour as wise, as holy, as Messias, as God, and this before kings, priests, and the whole world, who imputed to Him the most atrocious crimes of deepest infamy. He endured all kinds of interior and exterior sufferings in every member of His body, as appears from the description of the Passion. From this I drew the desire to suffer somewhat of it also: *Nolo, Domine, sine vulnere vivere; quia te undique video vulneratum*:[1] "Lord, I do not wish to live unwounded, when I contemplate Thee wounded everywhere." At other times I deem myself unworthy of such a privilege, and think that our Lord refrains from sending me such trials, because He sees how little strength I possess, and that what I say is but words; and this is indeed the case. Nevertheless, though I am unworthy to suffer, inasmuch as suffering is the imitation of Christ our Lord, I am worthy to suffer in so far as suffering is a punishment for my many sins.

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[1] Bern., *Serm. de Passion.*

IX. VARIOUS THOUGHTS.

35. My resolution is to be with a person with whom I may humble myself, when I am able, by discovering to him in all their deformity my sins; this must be to a confessor, or superior, for I am not allowed to humble myself before all. At other times I felt such abhorrence for my sins, as to wish divine justice to take vengeance upon me, chastising me with sufferings and contempt, but without God's mercy failing me: *Quis det, ut veniat petitio mea, et qui coepit, ipse me conterat, solvat manum suam, et succidat me:*[1] "Who will grant that my request may come, and that God may give me what I look for? And that he that hath begun may destroy me, that he may let loose his hand and cut me off?" I rejoice in the punishments of divine justice, inasmuch as far as in them shines forth this attribute of God, and am pleased that God should cast me into this purgatory, in order to be purified and to pay what I owe, and afterwards lead a better life: it caused me sensible joy that there is in God this retributive justice, and that there is a purgatory. At other times I formed the resolution to endure willingly the inward temptations which God should send, and for as long as He should will, exercising myself in desires to suffer; but this feeling is of short duration.

36. Thinking upon these words: *Aperite mihi portas justitiae, ingressus in eas confitebor*

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[1] Job vi. 8.

Domino:[1] "Open ye to me the gates of justice: I will go into them, and give praise to the Lord;" it occurred to me that the gates of justice are the principal devotions and means of perfection, and that God and the angels open these doors when they suggest inspirations and strong desires for it.

37. The first seems to me to be our Lord Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, so He says of Himself: *Ego sum ostium: per me si quis introierit, salvabitur; ingredietur, et egredietur, et pascua inveniet*:[2] "I am the door. By Me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved: and he shall go in, and go out, and shall find pastures." This is the principal door, because here is the fountain of justice: here we enter with knowledge and affection, with faith and love. Upon the threshold we meet with three rare examples of virtue, which are the stronger inducements because they are permanent and not merely transient. First, extreme humility, concealing His infinite greatness under so mean a form as bread and wine, lower than man, for which He is by many disowned, denied, ridiculed, and by most treated with little reverence. O my God and my King, *quanto pro me vilior, tanto mihi carior!* The deeper Thou didst humble Thyself the more highly will I exalt Thee and praise Thee. Secondly, obedience, descending from heaven at the very instant, at the voice of the priest, even an unworthy one, even though then coming were in order to be cast into the fire or into the mud; and this perseveringly, until the sacra-

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[1] Psalm cxvii. 19.

[2] St. John x. 9.

mental species are consumed. He says elsewhere: *Descendi de coelo, non ut faciam voluntatem meam, sed ejus, qui misit me. Haec est autem voluntas Patris mei, ut eum, qui venit ad me, non ejiciam foras, sed habeat vitam aeternam:*[1] "I came down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him that sent Me. Now this is the will of the Father Who sent Me: that of all that He hath given Me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again in the last day." Admit me, good Jesus, within this door, and grant me fulness of justice which consists solely in fulfilling this will. Thirdly, mercy, descending to give food to the hungry, the best food that can be given: He comes to clothe the naked with the robe of grace, to redeem the captive from the servitude of his passions, to visit those sick and in prison, and to bury those dead to the world in His precious wounds: *Abscondes eos in abscondito faciei tuae a conturbatione hominum, et indignatione*, etc.:[2] "Thou shalt hide them in the secret of Thy face, from the disturbance of man, etc." He also exercises the spiritual, enlightens the ignorant, gives counsel to those who need it by inspirations, comforts the sorrowful with His most intimate delights, and bears with impertinence, distractions and irreverences.

38. If, upon the threshold, I am inflamed by these three virtues, and with the desire to imitate them, I may proceed still further inwards, where there is the fulness of justice, which is His infinite charity: *Plenitudo legis est dilectio:*[3] "Love there-

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[1] St. John vi. 38, 39. [2] Psalm xxx. 21. [3] Rom. xiii. 10.

fore is the fulfilling of the law." He there discloses the infinite love which caused Him to descend in so humble a form, and the causes of it: the love which produces this prompt obedience, and moved Him to do the numerous works of mercy which He performed when living visibly upon earth. He who thus enters, who burns and is filled with this love and this justice, after having entered into this justice, breaks forth into God's praises: *Ingressus in eas confitebor Domino. Haec porta Domini, intrabunt in eam*:[1] "This is the gate of the Lord, the just shall enter into it." He calls it one, though in the beginning it was called many, because though one in itself, it includes the virtues of many.

39. The things in which I ought to show gratitude for this favour, and which will help me to enter, are these. First, to go with great hunger to receive it, using much diligence in the preparation, and in the thanksgiving afterwards. Secondly, to desire to be in His presence as long as I conveniently can, in prayer, examens, the divine office, and to visit Him often during the day, especially on rising, as one who goes to implore a benediction for the whole day, and to thank Him for past favours. Upon leaving His presence, say to Him: Lord, my heart remains here with Thee, now that my body can no longer stay; thus even from our room we can adore Him in spirit, and in passing by the churches in the town, *similiter*. Thirdly, to show profound reverence to our Lord exteriorly,

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[1] Psalm cxvii. 20.

not only when entering or leaving a church, or when in His presence, but also as to what appertains to His service, such as chalices, patens, corporals, purificators, hosts, and to the hands of priests. Blessed wouldst thou be, my soul, if God and His angels would open to me this door, granting me light to know this mystery, to love it, and to value it.

40. The second door which presents itself to me is our Blessed Lady, to whom the Church breaks forth in the hymn: *Tu Regis alti janua, et porta lucis fulgida:* "Thou art the door of the King of Heaven, the bright door of light." Also in that other: *Felix coeli porta.* Devotion to our Lady is the door to holiness, and to whom God gives this devotion, He has opened this door; if I do not possess it, I ought to weep, because the door is closed against me into the *Sancta Sanctorum.*[1] I ought to entreat God, upon His kingly throne in uncreated light, and my Guardian Angel to open to me this door by giving to me this devotion. *Aperite mihi portas justitiae:*[2] "Open ye to me the gates of justice." The means whereby I must obtain this are many and very pleasant.

41. A method occurred to me of which I had heard, of saying the Rosary when I do so otherwise than by the mysteries, and it is this: at the first decade, to invoke the nine choirs of angels, especially the Archangel Saint Gabriel, who guarded the Blessed Virgin, and ask them to praise her, and to praise God for the gifts which He has

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[1] Exodus xxvi. 34.

[2] Psalm cxvii. 19.

given her, and ask for me the joy which they enjoy with her as Queen. Then I praise her myself, confessing that in her are the graces of all the choirs of angels in greater abundance; I rejoice at this greatness, I praise God Who bestowed it upon her, I wish the whole world to praise her, and I ask it of her Son and of the Eternal Father. Lastly, I ask for some gift, either for what I need most, or for what shines most resplendently in the angels, such as purity, I ask them to beg her to obtain it for me and all unitedly ever to act as intercessors for me before God. According to this method, in the second decade, I invoke the patriarchs, prophets, and kings, especially Saint Joachim and Saint Joseph, etc. In the third I invoke the apostles, and disciples, especially those with whom I am familiar, such as Saint John the Evangelist, and Saint Luke. In the fourth, I invoke all the martyrs. In the fifth, the confessors, doctors and religious. In the sixth, virgins and widows, particularly those who had the greatest devotion to our Lady.

42. A method of the presence of God as light, occurred to me. God is light, I am darkness: I am within this light; it shines with much splendour, nevertheless I do not attain to the knowledge of it: *Lux in tenebris lucet, et tenebrae eam non comprehenderunt*:[1] "The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it." The sun is the fountain of light, our sun is God, our sun is Christ, this sun descends every day from

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[1] St. John i. 5.

heaven to earth, though hidden in a cloud, under the species of bread and wine; in no other manner is He seen and touched. For my good He does this, that I may approach nearer to this sun: *Accedite ad eum, et illuminamini*:[1] "Come ye to Him and be enlightened." Though this cloud hinders us from seeing Him, it does not prevent this Sun from emitting rays. Oh what rays! Oh what sparks It sends into the narrow limits of that little world, man, when It is within him!

43. There are three kinds of lights, *natural*, *by faith*, and *by acquired knowledge*. They are permanent, and we use them when we choose. And I am so rebellious! *Ipsi rebelles fuerunt lumini*:[2] "They have been rebellious to the light." The learned resisted this first light, therefore they were forsaken by God, as Saint Paul says. What will become of me if I resist the second and the third? On this account the fourth is wanting, or at least comes very tardily, for when it is great, it changes the heart; it is as a flash of lightning, and is not at my command: *Illuxerunt coruscationes tuae orbi terrae; vidit, et commota est terra*:[3] "His lightnings have shone forth to the world; the earth saw and trembled." How wonderful it is that the soul, which is of itself night and darkness, should occasionally burn so brightly with love to God, that as in a summer night there is sometimes much heat, and we see such frequent flashes of lightning that it seems like

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[1] Psalm xxxiii. 6.

[2] Job xxiv. 13.

[3] Psalm xcvi. 4.

day; so also, the soul has such numerous illuminations and inspirations that it appears to be filled with light. *Et nox illuminatio mea in deliciis meis: quia tenebrae non obscurabuntur a te, et nox sicut dies illuminabitur:*[1] "And night shall be my light in my pleasures; but darkness shall not be dark to Thee, and night shall be light as the day." They come at all times, when reciting psalms, reading books, studying, listening to sermons, when engaged in manual labour, eating, walking, etc., and particularly when we awake in the morning, as if God was waiting for our awaking to fill the soul with affections and thoughts. Sometimes this light comes whilst teaching some truth of Holy Scripture, some truth which we have read but not understood. Sometimes it comes with emotion, either with great admiration, or with joy, outbursts of delight, or with quiet gladness, or sweet tears.

44. Considering my numerous sins, once or more than once I was moved to rejoice that God has retributive justice to punish them, and not mercy only, so as to forgive them without satisfaction. I wished Him rather to punish them here, but with mercy, than to forgive them without satisfaction to His honour, and I said with David: *Deus ultionum, Deus ultionum libere egit, exaltare, qui judicas terram, redde retributionem superbis:*[2] "The Lord is the God to Whom revenge belongeth: the God of revenge hath acted freely. Lift up Thyself, Thou that judgest the earth:

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[1] Psalm cxxxviii. 11.

[2] *Ibid.* xciii. 1.

render a reward to the proud." O God of vengeance, I am comforted because Thou art magnified by the exercise of Thy justice, punishing this pride as it deserves. Chastise my pride, my ambition, my vanity, my hypocrisy, that I may satisfy Thee and content Thee: *Usquequo peccatores, Domine, usquequo peccatores gloriabuntur; effabuntur et loquentur iniquitates?* etc.:[1] "How long shall sinners, O Lord, how long shall sinners glory? Shall they utter and speak iniquity?" etc. Lord, how long shall these evil movements and inclinations of mine glory against Thee?

45. Here I discovered how the saints rejoice at this justice: *Laetabitur justus, cum viderit vindictam*:[2] "The just shall rejoice when he shall see the revenge." And they are right, for they rejoice that God has chastised them here, and the souls in purgatory rejoice that God is punishing them; so also the just upon earth, *similiter*. I also thought that for this God became man, in order to show forth His retributive justice in the person of the innocent: *Misericordiam et judicium cantabo tibi, Domine*:[3] "Mercy and judgment will I sing to Thee, O Lord." Whatsoever he sings, in that does he rejoice. Here I understand what the spouse says of her God, that He is *totus desiderabilis*, "all to be desired; because what appears most severe and terrible in Him, which is His retributive justice, is lovable, as much as His

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[1] Psalm xciii. 3.
[2] *Ibid.* lvii. 11.
[3] *Ibid.* c. 1.

goodness, wisdom, etc. At such times I cannot entertain dread of penalties; provided that God does not forsake me, fear is stilled, and I often say with deep feeling: *Non me derelinquas usquequaque*[1] (*id est, plus nimis*); and again: *A te nunquam separari permittas:* "O do not Thou utterly forsake me," nor allow me to be separated from Thee.

X. VARIOUS METHODS OF THE PRESENCE OF GOD ON SUFFERING, AND ON UNION WITH GOD, AND REASONS WHY THE PRACTICE OF HEARING CONFESSIONS IS SO PLEASING TO GOD.

46. In considering the presence of God as being within Him, I could do so in no other manner than by looking at God outside me, and completely encircling me; according to this method I was unable at the same time to consider God as within me, for I held these two methods to be incompatible at once. I have since come to see that it is possible for a person who looks within himself to consider God within him, and also himself within God. When a soul, by special impulse from God, enters into itself, and finds Him there, so also it enters within God. This is best known from experience. A soul in this state at once finds One with Whom to speak, yet it has no need of reasoning, and can have none. It is all colloquies and affections, beholding the greatness of this God and its own vileness: there it weeps,

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[1] Psalm cxviii. 8.

it implores, it loves, it rejoices, it sorrows, it abhors itself, it takes courage, and it rouses itself to obey and to suffer, to please God for God. In this sense may perhaps be understood what the saints say, that contemplation is the tomb of the soul, into which it enters, dies, and is buried; elsewhere it is said, that it enters into itself, and that it enters into God: *Abscondes eos in abscondito faciei tuae a conturbatione hominum*:[1] "Thou shalt hide them in the secret of Thy face from the disturbance of men." And also: *Esto mihi in Deum protectorem, et in domum refugii, ut salvum me facias*:[2] "Be Thou unto me a God, a protector, and a house of refuge to save me." *Introduxit me Rex in cellam vinariam*:[3] "The King brought me into the cellar of wine."

47. Another time I felt, particularly, how unspeakably precious is the treasure which I have within me, because in my innermost heart is the Divinity with all its infinity, its greatness, wisdom, goodness and omnipotence, and that my soul is of inestimable value on account of its likeness to God, and its capacity to receive Him. Precious is the treasure, but fragile and contemptible is the casket which contains it, for I have defiled it most shamefully by grievous sins.

48. As to suffering poverty, contempt, sorrows, and trials, there are three ways of behaving. First, with a cowardly spirit, and pusillanimity, in order not to suffer these things, fleeing from and avoiding what is in conformity with God's will,

[1] Psalm xxx. 21. [2] *Ibid.* 3. [3] Cant. iii. 4.

concerning myself or my office, preaching, hearing confessions, etc. Secondly, with littleness of spirit, contenting oneself merely with being prepared to endure the sufferings which arise. Thirdly, there is the heroic spirit, which goes forth to meet with and undertake what will entail suffering, for the greater glory of God, and the fulfilment of His will, in imitation of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who always courted opportunities for greater poverty, greater contempt, greater sorrows and greater trials, not contenting Himself with those that came. For this reason He left Nazareth, and was born at Bethlehem. For this reason He left Judea, and passed His childhood in Egypt. For this, in His youth, He practised the trade of a carpenter. For this, He was in the desert, and on the night of His Passion refrained from acting so as to escape from affronts and sufferings, etc. He warns us that he who contents himself with the lowest degree of goodness is near evil and that he is very far removed from it who ever seeks what is best.

49. The practice of hearing confessions is a heroic act, which is highly pleasing to God. First, because it enables the confessor to convert souls to their Creator, and to reconcile them to Him, and this more immediately than any other. Secondly, because in it he exercises all the works of spiritual mercy, and of corporal ones spiritually: there he teaches the ignorant, corrects the erring, forgives injuries, comforts the sorrowful, entreats God for the living, and gives good advice. There

he redeems the captive, and looses the prisoner by the forgiveness of sins; he clothes the naked with the robe of grace; he gives food and drink to the needy in this spiritual food, and he does so prepared according to their need, etc. And so I think that the good confessor obtains from God mercy: *Beati misericordes, quoniam ipsi misericordiam consequentur*:[1] "Blessed are the merciful; for they shall obtain mercy." No other alms comes up to this. Thirdly, because in this we fulfil the office which God has entrusted to us, for, as it is the office of the priest to offer the Body of our Lord Jesus Christ, so also is it his office to absolve from and forgive sins; for he receives power for both of these, and so he who holds this power, and jurisdiction to do this, performs his office, and in the Society he is bound to this by the institute, and by the obligation of the rules. Fourthly, because in this exercise we conquer ourselves, and the strong repugnance of the flesh, and it is done with less praise than preaching.

50. God has three ways of uniting Himself with His friends. First, the natural, by essence, presence and power: with this come all natural gifts. Secondly, the supernatural, by grace and charity: from this proceed all ordinary spiritual riches. Thirdly, also supernatural, by the special link of love and familiarity, from which proceed extraordinary blessings and favours: this last is for His greatest friends. I once felt great interior joy at the mere hope of attain-

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[1] St. Matt. v. 7.

ing to this union, and I pictured it to myself in the following manner. That the soul was raised above earth, and heaven, and all creation, and was united with God at a superior height, where it could despise all earthly advantages, property, honours, dignities, and whatever the world values, and that there it found satiety, because the gifts of God in themselves do not satiate until we raise ourselves by means of them to union with God, and come to possess God Himself, the Giver of all good things. It seemed to me that it was from this height that David said: *Vigilavi, et factus sum sicut passer solitarius in tecto*:[1] "I have watched, and am become as a sparrow all alone on the housetop." To the heights of this roof the birds fly swiftly and easily, *breviter et sine labore*. The lizards reach it by climbing: *Stellio manibus nititur, et moratur in aedibus Regis*:[2] "The house-lizard supporteth itself on hands, and dwelleth in kings' houses." Men ascend slowly and with difficulty by the windings of a staircase. Some things rise boldly, through some impetus which they receive, such as an arrow. So also there are four ways of attaining to this loftiness and union with God by which a soul may at different times ascend. First, by reason, as a man rises by the steps of creatures and by the works of God. Secondly, like the lizard, by the practice of works of obedience and of mercy towards his fellow-creatures. Thirdly, like the bird, by fervent affections, founded on the simple understanding of the attributes of God and His benefits. Fourthly, *sed raro, per raptum, sicut Paulus. Raptus sum in paradisum.*[1] As we read of St. Paul, "That he was caught up into paradise."

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[1] Psalm ci. 8.

[2] Prov. xxx. 28.

XI. VARIOUS OTHER THOUGHTS.

51. Asking our Lady one day after Mass, as my teacher, to send into my heart some feeling in accordance with what she felt when she communicated, it appeared to me that when our Lady communicated, receiving her Son sacramentally, there were renewed in her the feeling and delight which were given to her when He was first conceived in her womb by the operation of the Holy Ghost. I understood, that as our Lord was in the womb of His Mother, on whom, on that account, He bestowed the greatest graces: *Beatus venter, qui te portavit, et ubera quae suxisti:*[2] "Blessed is the womb that bore Thee, and the paps that gave Thee suck;" so His Majesty wished, by means of this Sacrament, to enter really and truly in the manner which was possible and convenient into the heart of all His faithful people, and that all should receive Him within them, proportionally, as His Mother did, that He might communicate to them the graces and gifts which He bestowed upon her. So the entrance of Christ into the breast of the person who

[1] 2 Cor. xii. 4.

[2] St. Luke xi. 27.

communicates is a likeness of His entrance into the womb of the Blessed Virgin, in order that we may partake of the gifts which she obtained by means of that entrance.

52. I experience three kinds of spiritual consolations more sensibly than usual in prayer and throughout the day. The first kind of thoughts is, concerning the goodness, mercy, wisdom, or presence of God, or some benefit of His either general or particular. These feelings come with wonder, joy, thanksgiving, love, humiliation, or other similar affections; sometimes they break forth into outward acts of praise, etc., sometimes they come with satiety and much satisfaction, which I then feel, and which arises from love or trust, so that I sometimes say to God that He has given me, to make me happy, double the hundredfold promised to me in this life. At other times I bless the day on which I began to know God, and to have dealings with Him, and think myself happy to have such a good God, such a good Father, Master, Shepherd, etc. Sometimes I long that all should know God, etc. Amongst these thoughts one sometimes occurs to me, which is, that if I were to feel and to see with strong light that which I now catch a glimpse of, namely, this greatness of God, I should faint or die, the body being unable to endure it.

53. The second kind of consolations is, the understanding of various portions of Holy Scripture, in accordance with the thoughts which I

have had, though at other times from the understanding of the passage arises the thought, or at least the deepening of it, and this mode of consolation lasts longer together with the recollection of the passage of God's Word. The third kind of consolations is, new reasonings and considerations upon truths by comparisons or similarities, either concerning things which I have seen and heard, or read, or which present themselves anew, by which the thought is deepened, and sometimes from the thought arises the reasoning; at other times, on the contrary, the thought follows from the reasoning. I made this reflection when I had two thoughts, which I weighed soon afterwards.

54. Being sorely afflicted for many days on account of numerous sins and passions, acknowledging myself unworthy of any gift or favour from God, I had a deep feeling of the infinite goodness and mercy of God, as something most lofty, so infinitely surpassing all my wretchedness, weakness, imperfections and repugnances, that they are lost in the merits and in the Blood of Christ, in such a manner, that I do not lose confidence to ask, and to obtain from God what I ask, through this infinite goodness and mercy, and the merits and Blood of Jesus; it seemed to me that He could not deny what I asked for His glory, though I am unworthy of it. I then realised those words of Saint John: *Non turbetur cor vestrum, creditis in Deum, et in me credite:*[1]

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[1] St. John xiv. 1.

"Let not your heart be troubled. You believe in God, believe also in me." He has no need to be troubled who has lively faith and trust in God and in Christ. I regained courage so as to pray with the Psalmist: *Cor humile crea in me, Deus,*[1] *cor mite, cor obediens, cor abstinens, cor pacificum, cor zelosum;* create in me a humble heart, O God, a heart which is meek, obedient, mortified, peaceable, and zealous. He who says, "create," acknowledges the infinite goodness and omnipotence of God: *Qui ex nihilo creat, et nullis requisitis meritis et dispositionibus, potest cor mundum creare;* He Who creates out of nothing, without merit or previous disposition, can create a pure heart. He Who prays to God entreats Him to supply what is wanting to our dispositions out of the fulness of His mercy, and the merits of Christ.

55. At another time, considering God's presence *ubique*, everywhere, I understood that I live in God as in a house, wherein I sleep, eat, study, converse, and walk, where I am defended from cold, heat, robbers and enemies, and am sheltered and repose. So also, I live in God, I eat, converse, etc., and in Him I am defended, sheltered, etc. I understood those words of the Psalm: *Esto mihi in Deum protectorem et in domum refugii*:[2] "Be thou unto me a God, a protector, and a house of refuge:" and that other: *Qui habitat in adjutorio altissimi*, etc.:[3] "He that dwelleth in the aid of the Most High." He that dwells in God, reposes in a perfect shelter.

[1] "Create a clean heart in me, O God." Psalm l. 12.

[2] Psalm xxx. 3.

[3] *Ibid.* xc. 1.

56. In this house I found three special mansions, *sumpta occasione ex illo*, availing myself of that passage: *In domo Patris mei mansiones multae sunt*:[1] "In My Father's house there are many mansions." First there is the mansion or abode of the omnipotence of God, which is most rich, and in it He discovers what He can do and what those who are His own can perform in Him, by ineffable experience. The door by which to enter is confidence in God: *Introibo in potentias Domini*:[2] "I will enter into the powers of the Lord, to share them." The second is that of God's wisdom, in which He illuminates, teaches, and discloses admirable things concerning His attributes, works, and judgments. The door is humility: *Revelasti ea parvulis*:[3] "Thou hast revealed them to little ones." The third is that of the infinite goodness and charity of God, in which He inflames, kindles, unites, transforms, delights, and gives to know by experience His infinite mercies. The door is obedience. These are the mansions spoken of in Canticles: *Introduxit me Rex in cellaria sua*:[4] "The King hath brought me into His store-rooms, the cellars of His love."

XII. VARIOUS DEVOTIONS.

57. There once occurred to me a method of walking in order to praise God, like the three Children in various ways. First, invoking the nine

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[1] St. John xiv. 2.
[2] Psalm lxx. 16.
[3] St. Matt. xi. 25.
[4] Cant. i. 3.

choirs of angels to praise Him, in this form: *Benedicite, Angeli Domini, Domino, laudate, et superexaltate eum in saecula; Benedicite, Archangeli Domini, Domino, laudate*, etc.; *Benedicite, Principatus Domini, Domino:*[1] "O ye angels of the Lord, bless the Lord: praise and exalt Him above all for ever," etc. "Archangels and Principalities, bless the Lord," etc. Then ascending through the Powers, Virtues, Thrones, Cherubim and Seraphim, to add: *Benedicite, Michael, Gabriel et Raphael, Domino, laudate, et superexaltate eum in saecula. Benedic, Angele mi custos, Domino, lauda, et superexalta eum in saecula:* "O Michael, Gabriel and Raphael, bless the Lord: praise Him above all for ever; O my Guardian Angel, bless the Lord and praise Him for ever." Then continuing the same as to other particular angels, or archangels, who guard the house, city, diocese, or province, etc., concluding with the prayer: *Deus, qui miro ordine angelorum*, etc.

58. Secondly, invoking in the same way all the saints in common, according to the order in which they stand in the Litany, thus: *Benedicite, Patriarchae et Prophetae Domini, Domino, laudate et superexaltate eum in saecula. Benedicite, Apostoli et Evangelistae Domini, Domino*, etc.: "All ye holy Patriarchs and Prophets, all ye holy Apostles and Evangelists, bless the Lord." And so descending to the disciples of our Lord, the Innocents, Martyrs, Pontiffs and Confessors, doctors and priests, to Levites, monks and hermits, virgins and widows,

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[1] Dan. iii. 58.

and to all the saints of God; lastly to the Queen of Angels, saying: "Blessed Virgin, Mother of God, bless and praise His greatness for ever and ever." Then descending to particular saints, with the prayer: *Omnipotens, sempiterne Deus, qui nos omnium sanctorum*, etc.

59. Exciting my soul with all its powers, my senses and members to do the same, thus: *Benedic, anima mea, Domino, lauda, et superexalta eum in saecula. Benedic, spiritus meus, Domino: et: Benedic, memoria, et intellectus, et voluntas, appetitus meus, aestimativa mea, imaginatio mea, sensus communis meus, visus, auditus, olfactus, gustus, tactus, lingua, manus, pedes, ossa, nervi, venae, artus, palpebrae, et sic de aliis membris; cum oratione: Agimus tibi gratias pro universis donis et beneficiis*, etc. "O my soul, bless the Lord, praise and exalt Him above all for ever. My spirit, bless the Lord. Memory and understanding and will, my appetite, my judgment, my imagination, my common-sense, my sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch, my tongue, my hands, my feet, bones, nerves, veins, my eyelids and all my other members," ending with the prayer: "We give Thee thanks, Almighty God, for all Thy gifts and benefits," etc.

60. Another method occurred to me of rendering thanks to God by the Rosary, saying in place of each "Hail Mary" these words: "Thanks be to God," or "Thanks be to Jesus Christ our Lord," or "Blessed be my God," or "Blessed be Jesus," or "I rejoice at Thy glory, my God," or some similar act, and instead of the "Our Father," the versicle:

"Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost," etc.; or the prayer: *Agimus tibi gratias*, etc. And I thought of saying the Rosary in the same manner also, to the Blessed Virgin, in thanksgiving, after this form: "Thanks be to the Blessed Virgin"; or "Blessed be our Lady"; or "Thanks be to the Mother of God," etc. Also another to my Guardian Angel, for the diligence with which he watches over me.

61. Several methods of reciting the Divine Office attentively have occurred to me. First, at the beginning of the psalm, to direct it to the honour and glory of a Divine Person, the first to the Father, the second to the Son, the third to the Holy Ghost, and at the end of the psalm to offer it to the same Divine Person, asking something from Him; and whilst I say it, to conconsider whether there be something to ask from, or something for which to praise that Divine Person. In the same manner each psalm can be offered in honour of some particular saint, such as our Lady, etc., or some angel, or choir of angels. Secondly, to apply the psalm as an act of thanksgiving for some benefit received from God, such as creation, preservation, redemption, baptism, penance, vocation to religion, the Holy Eucharist, etc. Thirdly, to apply it to obtain from God some virtue: the first, in order to obtain from God humility; the second, faith; the third, obedience, etc.; observing whether there be something which inclines me to that virtue, and to the love of it, and lastly, asking it from our Re-

deemer. Fourthly, to address it to the honour of some mystery of the life and death of Christ, asking at the close for the esteem, love, and imitation of it; in the first, His Incarnation; in the second, the Nativity; in the third, the Circumcision, etc.

62. My soul has gained much profit from frequently visiting and remaining with the Blessed Sacrament. I thought of two efficacious reasons calculated to increase my affection for this: first, that by so doing I afford pleasure to our Lord, and fulfil His wish and His delight, Who said: *Venite ad me, omnes qui laboratis*:[1] "Come to Me, all you that labour." And, *Deliciae meae esse cum filiis hominum*:[2] "My delights were to be with the children of men." O my soul, say to thy dearest Lord Jesus Christ: *Deliciae meae esse cum Filio hominis.* My delight is to dwell with the Son of man; that so we may summon our Lord to us. The second reason is, that since He performed such a journey as from heaven to earth in order to be with me, much more should I make so short a one as from my room to the church in order to be with Him. I remembered the warning which our Lord gave to the Jews: *Regina austri surget in judicio cum generatione ista, et condemnabit eam; quia venit a finibus terrae audire sapientiam Salomonis, et ecce plusquam Salomon hic*:[3] "The queen of the south shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and

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[1] St. Matt. xi. 28.
[2] Prov. viii. 31.
[3] St. Matt. xii. 42.

behold a greater than Solomon here." O my soul! be not slothful in visiting this Lord: *Ecce plusquam Salomon hic*. He will be to thee what Solomon was to the Queen of Saba; to teach thee the words of eternal life; to dispel doubts and darkness, and to bestow upon thee gifts of inestimable value: *Rex autem Salomon dedit Reginae Saba omnia quae voluit et petivit ab eo, exceptis iis quae ultro obtulerat ei munere Regio:*[1] "And King Solomon gave the Queen of Saba all that she desired and asked of him: besides what he offered her of himself of his royal bounty." O my soul, visit thy Lord, and offer Him thy gifts as the Queen of Saba did to Solomon; offer Him thy heart, thy memory, thy senses, and all that thou hast, and thou wilt behold the return made; for the Scripture says: *Dedit ei multo plus, quam attulerat ad eum:*[2] "He gave many more things than she brought to him." The gifts of the Queen of Saba to Solomon were abundant, but far greater were the gifts that Solomon gave to her.

63. Sometimes in entering a church my soul gives testimony to the presence of our Lord, by inward joy and a delight and inward laughter of the soul only at seeing itself before its God, so that even the body rejoices. At other times it feels various sudden affections of love, humility, praise, etc., with tears and tenderness of heart, so that, O my soul, you may well exclaim with the Queen of Saba: *Beati viri tui, et beati servi tui, qui assistunt coram te semper, et audiunt sapientiam*

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[1] 3 Kings x. 13.

[2] 2 Paral. ix. 12.

tuam:[1] "Blessed are Thy men, and blessed are Thy servants, who stand before Thee always and hear Thy wisdom." Blessed art thou, my soul, if thou canst spend much time in the presence of our Lord. During this time, considering how infinite this blessing is in every way, because the Giver is infinite, the thing given is infinite, the love which bestows it is infinite, and the number of times that it is given, or would if necessary be given, is infinite, also, that I am infinitely unworthy to receive it, my soul is astounded, and knows not how to magnify this benefit, nor how to praise God for it. I felt what David did: *Defecit in salutare tuum anima mea:*[2] "My soul hath fainted after Thy salvation." And also: *Te decet hymnus*, or *silentium in Sion:*[3] "A hymn, O God, becometh Thee in Sion;" a hymn, and silence of wonder, praise Thee, O Lord.

64. Various acts of confidence occurred to me, in order to unite myself with our Lord. First, that by receiving him my soul will be reformed, healed and comforted: *Qui manducat me, vivet propter me:*[4] "He that eateth Me, the same also shall live by Me." Secondly, that when I touch Him I can be healed by means of that touch if I possess the same faith as the woman who said: *Si tetigero tantum vestimentum ejus, salva ero:*[5] "If I shall only touch His garment I shall be healed." Thirdly, that as merely to look at the brazen serpent healed the Hebrews of the wounds inflicted

[1] 3 Kings x. 8.
[2] Psalm cxviii. 81.
[3] Psalm lxiv. 2.
[4] St. John vi. 58.
[5] St. Matt. ix. 21.

by real serpents, much more will it avail to heal me to look at our Lord. Fourthly, when He is hidden, and I no longer behold Him, I hope that He will heal me by a word, anywhere and everywhere, as said the Centurion: *Tantum dic verbo, et sanabitur anima mea:*[1] "Only say the word and my 'soul' shall be healed." Then I remembered what Christ did in the upper room on the day of His Resurrection: *Insufflavit, et dixit eis: Accipite Spiritum Sanctum:*[2] "He breathed on them; and He said to them: Receive ye the Holy Ghost." O good Jesus, send down this divine breath upon me, and say to me: *Accipe Spiritum Sanctum:* "Receive the Holy Ghost." So also I was touched at the recollection of these words: *Dic animae meae, salus tua ego sum:*[3] "Say to my soul: I am thy salvation."

65. Feeling much timidity one day as to asking great things from God, on account of my wretchedness, I came upon those words which David used so frequently in the Psalm: *In verba tua supersperavi; ut et illa: Defecit in salutare tuum anima mea, et in verbum tuum supersperavi:*[4] "My soul hath very much hoped in Thy words," and again: "My soul hath fainted after Thy salvation; and in Thy word I have very much hoped." It occurred to me especially, that I can hope for greater things from God, than my weakness could expect, because this hope is founded on God's infinite mercy, and the infinite merits of Christ, as the word *super-*

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[1] St. Matt. viii. 8.
[2] St. John xx. 22.
[3] Psalm xxxiv. 3.
[4] *Ibid.* cxviii. 81.

speravi declares. Thus I can hope for union with Him, familiar treatment, sweetness in suffering, etc. Hence I was no longer afraid of making requests to Him, on account of my unworthiness, because I looked at the infinite mercy of God, which exceeds all misery; upon it my prayer is founded, and to behold it is extremely sweet. I thought that, as an atom placed between me and the sun interposes no impediment to my receiving its light and heat, so, all my wretchedness and sins (if I really hope in God, and cast myself upon His mercy with true sorrow for them) are as an atom, and will not impede the rays of light and love which He imparts, etc. Hence I perceived that I have no cause for vainglory, though our Lord should hear my prayers and bestow gifts upon me, since all this proceeds from His infinite mercy and liberality, I being most unworthy of all. In order to repress the movements of this passion, I thought of this verse: *Non mihi, Domine, sed tibi sit omnis honor et gloria*:[1] "Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to Thy name give glory." For me let there be nothing, O Lord, but for Thee all honour and glory.

XIII. ON SELF-DENIAL AND MORTIFICATION.

66. Perfect self-renunciation consists in continual watchfulness in order to discover disorderly movements of soul, and to repress them and punish it for them immediately, like a vigorous soldier

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[1] Psalm cxiii. 1.

keeping guard on the frontier, who, seeing the advance of the enemy, goes to meet him, and kills him, or treats him so severely, as to strike terror into the rest and deprive them of courage, etc. *Genus pietatis est in hac re esse crudelem*;[1] cruelty is mercy in this matter. Or, as St. John Climacus says, as the cat watches carefully for the mouse in order to pounce upon it when it leaves its hole, so to watch over our evil movements that at the first sign of them we may spring upon them and destroy them: *Capite nobis vulpes parvulas, quae demoliuntur vineas, sed cave tibi*:[2] "Catch us the little foxes that destroy the vines:" but be on your guard for yourself. Take care that what happens to the cat does not happen to thee, when it plays and trifles with the mouse, so that it escapes from its clutches and continues to live.

67. These disorderly movements are of four kinds. First, those of the thoughts and the imagination, which are disorderly either by reason of their being dangerous and hurtful, vain and useless, or excessively eager. Secondly, disorders in the affections and desires, by reason of their relating to things forbidden, such as pride, envy, anger; or in a forbidden manner, such as an anxious and troubled affection for study, in order to preach, or to become learned, or troubled solicitude in one's office. Thirdly, disorders in repugnance to works of virtue, together with the tepidity ensuing therefrom. The fourth kind of disorder is freedom of the senses in seeing, hearing,

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[1] St. Jerome.

[2] Cant. ii. 15.

speaking, and moving, incited thereto by curiosity, impulse, or levity, etc. If, in these four kinds of disorders, I have mortified and denied myself, I have removed the impediments to attaining to union with God, and perfect familiarity with Him, and I can say: *Introduxit me Rex in cellam vinariam, et ordinavit in me charitatem:*[1] "He brought me into the cellar of wine, he set in order charity in me." I realized this is one of my exercises, and proceeding carefully, became aware of various disorderly movements, and knew by experience what our Lord said: *Vigilate, et orate ne intretis in tentationem:*[2] "Watch ye, and pray that you enter not into temptation."

68. I also understood how, from love to God, proceed this watchfulness, and an earnest desire for mortification, so as to make use of it in order to carry out its inclinations. I pictured to myself this love to God as a river divided into seven streams, and that by the impetus of the current a channel is made for its waters, sweeping away every impediment: so love overcomes all difficulties by means of mortification, in order to follow the current of its inclinations.

69. Love's first inclination is to destroy its principal enemies, namely, sins, and to make satisfaction to God for them, chastising the will, the senses, and the flesh as authors of so much evil, most deserving of all punishment, so that they may not dare to do the same in future; and for this purpose we avail ourselves of mortification. Love's

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[1] Cant. 4.

[2] Cant. ii. 4.

second inclination is to increase *in infinitum*, desiring more and more to know and to love its God; and to this end it inclines us to overcome the difficulties which impede this knowledge and increase, namely, earthly affections: *Quia diminutio cupiditatum est augmentum charitatis: perfectio, nulla cupiditas.* The diminution of the appetites is the increase of charity, and perfection is the absence of disorderly desires; and this is accomplished by means of mortification. The third inclination is to acknowledge, with due gratitude, the Author of our being, God, Who brought us forth *gratis*, and Who feeds, increases, and perfects us with the food of numberless benefits: for this it deserves to do Him services that cause pain, even to blood-shedding; and this is done by self-denial: *Quid retribuam Domino*, etc.:[1] "What shall I render to the Lord?" Shall I not shed my blood in His service? The fourth inclination is to become like the Beloved, since by so doing we shall be more loved and more one with Him, since similarity is the cause of love; and as the life of the Beloved, Christ, was all mortification in its poverty, contempt, sorrow and suffering, for all this to love mortification. The fifth is to have great regard for those dear to our Beloved, namely, our fellowmen, endeavouring to win their souls, in order to increase the patrimony of the Beloved, and to serve them corporally, because in them we see the Beloved: this cannot be done without the sacrifice of much self-interest and temporal comfort, and for this we use mortification. Love's sixth inclination, when it is perfect, is to go to behold its Beloved, and to enjoy His presence. There are two causes which may delay this: first, not to have filled up the measure of merits which God requires; secondly, though this has been done, not to have paid all the debt of punishment due to sin, for which reason there is detention in purgatory. In order to accelerate the first, and satisfy for the second, we must use self-denial and mortification, for he who lives and dies upon the cross flies straight to joy, as the good thief heard upon the cross: *Hodie mecum eris in Paradiso*:[1] "This day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise." The seventh inclination, which is the principal one, is to fulfil in all things the will of God, the Beloved, for His greater glory, placing this before all self-interest and convenience, and even before the sight of God: for this end we must take pleasure in the mortification of our own will, and be prepared for all self-renunciation, since it is the will of the Beloved. Lastly, as a man who is satiated with choice food has a loathing for any other, so love finds such satiety in God alone, that it heeds not all things created, and thus it is easy for it to mortify itself by not seeing, enjoying, nor possessing them, etc. Concerning this, I often thought of the satiety of the Blessed Virgin in possessing her Son; she was so satisfied that she felt neither poverty, contempt, nor exile: as said the mother of Tobias: *Omnia in te uno habentes*:[2] "Having all things together in thee alone." I ask our Lord for these inclinations, together with the grace which smooths our path.

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[1] Psalm cxv. 12.

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[1] St. Luke xxiii. 43.

[2] Tobias x. 5.

70. I also understood that this vigilance in mortification must be maintained over the movements of the four passions, which are the root of all the rest, joy, sadness, hope and fear, in the following manner, which is most useful. First, by repressing the movements which arise, not only when they relate to evil things, but also in things which do not concern me, because when I exercise vigilance, I see in me numberless movements of joy and hope, sadness and fear, about many things which are trifling or imaginary, and these occupy the understanding and the will, and through them the power of soul is weakened by not directing these affections to God. Secondly, when these affections are for things natural and necessary, I ought to refer them to God, and *nullo modo* by no means take for my own what I find, and thus to practise self-denial. For instance, it affords me natural pleasure to eat, to see, to study, or to receive the honour appertaining to my office; I ought to refer that pleasure to God, rejoicing in those things inasmuch as they are God's works, and proceed from His hand: *Juxta illud, quia delectasti me in factura tua.*[1] "For Thou hast given me, O Lord, a delight in Thy doings." Lord, may I delight in Thy doings, and *nullo modo* on account of their being pleasant to me. *Similiter:* As to movements of hope concerning health, office, etc.

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[1] Psalm xci. 5.

To endeavour to hope in so far as it proceeds from the hand of God, and in His will, and for His glory, so that God may be all my joy and my hope, and whatever is ordered for Him. *Similiter:* Does sadness or fear come to me on account of some spiritual loss? To endeavour that such sadness or fear may arise from the loss in so far as it proceeds or may proceed from my faults, so that the fear and sadness may be reduced to this alone, namely, the loss of God or the possibility of losing Him.

71. There is another most profitable method of repressing or moderating these affections by their contraries. If I take pleasure in food, necessary honour, etc., to stir up acts of sadness, because I am not treated as my sins deserve, and because God is perhaps rewarding me with this here, also on account of the hindrance this may be in serving Him. Do I feel sadness on account of spiritual adversities? To practise acts of joy at being treated as I deserve, and because God in His providence wills it, and on account of the spiritual benefit which may ensue to me therefrom. *Similiter:* Do I feel fear of dishonour, trials, sorrows, etc.? To practise acts of desire and hope for such, as something which I fully deserve, and which may avail me much for the said ends. Do I, on the contrary, experience movements of hope on account of prosperity in these things? To practise acts of fear concerning them, because of the injury which they may do me, and the hindrance which they may be in God's service, etc.

72. It seemed to me that in this manner I could

fulfil what God said to St. Francis: "Take sweet things for bitter, and bitter for sweet, converting spiritual joys and hopes into sadness and fears, and sadness and fears into joys and hopes." Also the words of the Prophet: *Si separaveris pretiosum a vili, quasi os meum eris*:[1] "If thou wilt separate the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as My mouth," that is, thou shalt be My prophet. Because in the same thing there is something precious to enjoy, which I ought to accept, and something vile which I ought to refuse and shun; in the honour due to me *ratione officii*, there is cause for sorrow, by reason of my vileness, pride and worldly vanity; yet when I look at it as a means for the proper fulfilment of my office, I ought to accept it.

73. I have often read in Blosius recommendations to offer our works to God *in unione meritorum Jesu Christi*, in union with the merits of Jesus Christ; my work of obedience, *in unione obedientiae Christi*, in union with the obedience of Christ; my trials, *in unione laborum, et dolorum Christi, et sic de aliis*, in union with the labours and sorrows of Christ: and so of the rest. To offer my works to God, united and incorporated with similar works which Christ performed for me, for, from this oblation and union our works receive great value, and are very acceptable to God. I have read, in a book written by Saint Gertrude, many revelations made to her by our Lord concerning this; and desiring to know how this truth stands in strict theology,

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[1] Jeremias xv. 19.

in order to exercise myself in this oblation and manner of referring my works, it occurred to me that God, by the merits of Jesus Christ, applied by this act of oblation, grants some special help, motion, inspiration, or devotion, by reason of which the work is better performed, and also more acceptable than if it were not preceded by such an oblation; and the reason is, because this act is most pleasing to God, since by it we confess Christ our Lord to be our Head, the origin of all our good, and our Mediator, and we petition *cum obsecratione*, with obsecration, alleging His merits as our title to be heard, I ask this through Jesus Christ Thy Son. So this prayer is more acceptable to God: *Peto hoc per Jesum Christum Filium tuum*, than if it were a simple petition, *sic in proposito*, so in the present case; immediately, *per modum impetrationis*, by way of impetration, much is obtained by this method of offering our works to God.

XIV. METHODS OF WORKING, AND CERTAIN THOUGHTS.

74. *In omnibus operibus tuis praecellens esto*, in all thy works keep the pre-eminence. It resembles the Divinity to perform good works peacefully, without disturbance; with love, without self-interest; with magnanimity, without presumption; making little account of them though they be great. This portrait of the Divinity is drawn from God's method of operating. It is a Divine

property to be fully occupied whilst most unoccupied, working everything as peacefully as if it were not working at all. *In tranquillitate omnia judicas*:[1] "Thou . . . judgest with tranquillity." It is a Divine property to do good lovingly, without seeking its own advantage from its creatures: *Diligam eos spontanee*: "I will love them of My own accord." It is a Divine property to perform great things for its friends with magnanimity, as if they were little things, and to bestow great gifts upon them as if it were giving them small things: *Dat omnibus affluenter, et non improperat*:[2] "Who giveth to all men abundantly, and upbraideth not."

75. When works are performed in this manner for God, they are the likeness of the Divinity, and the words of the Holy Ghost are fulfilled: *In omnibus operibus tuis praecellens esto*:[3] "In all thy works keep the pre-eminence." He says *in omnibus*, great and small, as He wills they should be. God gave the same perfection of inward and outward senses and motive powers to the small animals as to the great, to those of earth, of sea, and of air; the ant has the same perfection as the elephant, the nightingale as the eagle, the sardine as the whale: *Dei perfecta sunt opera*:[4] "The works of God are perfect." Thus, the just must employ as much perfection with the aforesaid properties, in small works as in great ones, as our Father Saint Ignatius says. O Eternal God, depict in my

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[1] Wisdom xii. 18.

[2] St. James i. 5.

[3] Eccl. xxxiii. 23.

[4] Deut. xxxii. 4.

soul this portrait of the Divinity, in order that I may do good works magnanimously and without presumption; with love, not selfishness; with peace, without perturbation. O Eternal Father, grant me the first through Thy Son. Only-begotten Son, grant me the second through Thy Mother. O Holy Spirit, grant me the third through the Father, the Son, and His Mother. We meet with this method of working chiefly pictured in Christ as Man, next in His Holy Mother, and then in the apostles and certain illustrious saints, who, in this, were as gods: *Ego dixi dii estis, et filii Excelsi omnes;* and *Omnes dii terrae vehementer elevati sunt*:[1] "I have said: you are gods, and all of you the sons of the Most High," and "For the strong gods of the earth are exceedingly exalted." Be gods in this manner of acting.

76. Magnanimity is heroic humility, which makes little of high honours. Magnanimity is, to perform great things, and not to esteem oneself nor become proud on account of them. Magnanimity is, to obey laws and rules perfectly, and to consider oneself a mean and profitless servant. Saint Bernard says: *Magna et rara virtus, est ut magna licet operantem magnum te nescias, et magnifestam omnibus, tuam te solum latere sanctitatem.*

77. It is a Divine property to perform great things for its friends, either so great that they could not be surpassed, or with such earnest desire, that deeming them small, it is prepared to bestow others which are still greater, as was

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[1] Psalm lxxxi. 6; *Ibid.* xlvi. 10.

said to David: *Et si parva sunt ista, adjiciam tibi majora*:[1] "And if these be little, I shall add far greater things unto thee." These are what are called in Scripture *Opera Dei*. *Quid faciemus, ut operemur opera Dei?*[2] "What shall we do that we may work the works of God?" The works of God are those commanded or counselled by God, and performed in the way in which He is in the habit of working. These are always great, and may therefore be called things of God: *Justitia tua, sicut montes Dei*:[3] "Thy justice is as the mountains of God." *Superest aliquis de domo Saul, ut faciam cum eo misericordiam Dei*:[4] "Is there anyone left of the house of Saul, that I may show the mercy of God unto him?" and *Hoc est opus Dei, ut credatis in eum*:[5] "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him Whom He hath sent." I applied to myself the words of Christ: *Me oportet operari opera ejus, qui misit me, donec dies est*:[6] "I must work the works of Him that sent Me, whilst it is day;" whilst I live, and am able. *Homuncio, dispone domui tuae, cras forte morieris*; reconcile thy conscience, O man, thou wilt perhaps die to-morrow. These words were a great check upon me, as also the following: *Villice iniquitatis, vide quid agas, cras forte reddes rationem villicationis tuae*:[7] "Unjust steward, look what thou doest, for perchance to-morrow thou wilt have to give an account of thy stewardship."

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[1] 2 Kings xii. 8.
[2] St. John vi. 28.
[3] Psalm xxxv. 7.
[4] 2 Kings ix. 3.
[5] St. John vi. 29.
[6] *Ibid.* ix. 4.
[7] St. Luke xvi. 2.

78. God has rented to me supernatural powers and virtues, as a gentleman lets his lands, with two conditions: first, that they should be cultivated in order to produce fruit; secondly, that part of the produce should be paid to the owner. *Sic Deus,* Thus does God, with two conditions: that we should labour and cultivate these virtues, and improve them, and pay him a part, by giving Him honour and glory; and for this end He wishes the fruit to be abundant, so that greater honour and glory may accrue to Him, even though the profit is mine. I have to render an account to God for these two things. First, if by negligence and idleness I have not practised the virtues in order to bring forth abundant fruits of good works, concealing the talent instead of sowing with it; secondly, if I have not paid the rent, out of the herd and the granary, namely, the honour and glory due to God, stealing and seizing upon the whole for myself. *Vide quid agas;* see what thou art doing.

79. Upon those words of St. Paul: *Qui potest depositum meum servare:*[1] "He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him;" it occurred to me one St. Paul's day most forcibly, that God has two chests of deposits, closed and locked, one wherein are deposited the good works and the merits of the just, not a single one of which is lost, and of this St. Paul speaks; the other, wherein are deposited the evil works and sins of the wicked, not one being forgotten, and of this Moses speaks, when he says concerning the sins of his nation:

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[1] 2 Tim. i. 12.

Nonne haec condita sunt apud me, et signata in thesauris meis?[1] "Are not these things stored up with me, and sealed up in my treasures?" At the judgment day these chests will be opened, each will behold what he has there deposited, and God will give to each his deserts. I was strongly impressed with the words which follow, so as not to consider this day of account distant, when these chests are to be opened: *Juxta est dies perditionis, et adesse festinant tempora: judicavit Dominus populum suum, et in servis suis miserebitur*:[2] "The day of destruction is at hand, and the time makes haste to come. The Lord will judge His people, and will have mercy on His servants." Take heed then, my soul, each day and hour, what thou dost deposit in these chests.

80. *Nisi granum frumenti mortuum fuerit, ipsum solum manet*:[3] "Unless the grain of wheat falling into the ground, die, itself remaineth alone." If thou dost not mortify thyself, and die to the world, thou wilt remain alone; alone, without the sweet company of God; alone, without His special protection, and the special aids which He affords to the mortified; alone, without the fruit of abundant good works; alone, without having gained souls; alone, without spiritual consolations; thou wilt walk as if alone in prayer, in study, in preaching, and in thy office, which will be to thee a drudgery. Mortify thyself, and die thus, and thou wilt not remain alone.

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[1] Deut. xxxii. 34.

[2] *Ibid.* 35, 36.

[3] St. John xii. 24, 25.

81. Attend, my soul, to what our Lord said: *Qui misit me, mecum est, et non reliquit me solum, quia quae placita sunt ei, facio semper:*[1] "And he that sent Me is with Me, and He hath not left Me alone: for I do always the things that please Him." If thou dost wish God not to leave thee alone, endeavour to please Him in all things; for thou canst only obtain this by dying to thyself: die then; die, in order to live, for it is a painful thing to tread alone a path so rugged, so perilous, and so long. If thou dost die to self, thou wilt deserve that God should accompany thee, for the mortified person meets with Divine wisdom in all his paths and in all his works, to converse with him, and to feed him: *Quoniam dignos se ipse circuit quaerens, et in viis ostendit se illis hilariter, et in omni providentia occurrit illis.*[2] As the mortified person no longer takes care of himself, God takes him under the charge of His providence.

XV. THE ORIGIN OF PUSILLANIMITY, AND ITS REMEDY.

82. Pusillanimity in me proceeds from two roots, namely, want of trust in God, and great love of honour and vainglory; therefore the remedy is the removal of these roots.

83. First, by greater confidence in God, firmly believing that He takes special care of me, and everything relating to me, corporal and spiritual,

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[1] St. John viii. 29.

[2] Wisdom vi. 17.

great and small, life, health, honour, happiness, office, employment, place, success, etc., and that He will order all as will tend to His greater glory, and my greater profit, of which I may be quite certain if I trust in Him, since He has said: *Jacta super Dominum tuum curam tuam, et ipse te enutriet*:[1] "Cast thy care upon the Lord and He shall sustain thee." *Omnem sollicitudinem vestram projicientes in eum, quoniam ipsi est cura de vobis*:[2] "Casting all your troubles upon Him, for He hath care of you." *Nolite solliciti esse, quid manducabimus*, etc.:[3] "Be not solicitous therefore, saying, What shall we eat." *Primum quaerite Regnum Dei, et justitiam ejus, et haec omnia adjicientur vobis*:[4] "Seek ye therefore first the Kingdom of God, and His justice, and all these things shall be added unto you." And especially to believe most firmly and undoubtingly, that in all my trials, tribulations, perplexities, sorrows and dangers, whether they proceed from the devil or from men, from my office and occupation, or from my own wickedness, God will hear me when I cry to Him, will grant me what I ask or something better, and this either immediately, or when more convenient for me. This trust should be placed chiefly in the infinite mercy and liberality of God, and in the infinite merits of Christ our Lord, because I, wretched creature that I am, cannot ask as a son, or as a friend, or as a faithful servant, but as an importunate beggar beseeches one rich in mercy, who delights in being asked, in order that he may bestow.

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[1] Psalm liv. 23.
[2] I St. Peter v. 7.
[3] St. Matt. vi. 31.
[4] *Ibid.* 33.

84. The second means is on my part: bravely to repress all vain desires to please men, in order to be honoured and esteemed by them, and to trample upon all idle fears of displeasing them and being despised by them, and with bold trust in God, to undertake the duties of His service, which bring upon me this fear of contempt, because by so doing I honour God, and oblige Him to help me, since He has said: *Invoca me: in die tribulationis eruam te, et honorificabis me*:[1] "Have recourse to Me, and thou wilt labour valiantly for My honour." It was because St. Peter had this confidence that he threw himself into the sea, and walked upon the waves without sinking; but when he feared and became distrustful, he began to sink, and therefore these words were addressed to him: *Modicae fidei, quare dubitasti?*[2] "O thou of little faith, why didst thou doubt?" In so far as depends upon me, I wish to lean towards what will displease men, if it be to the equal glory of God, rather than towards what will please them, and to prefer what is adverse to what is prosperous; and in so far as I can legitimately do so, often to act as will please them least, in order that by so doing I may overcome this fear which is such a grievous hindrance in God's service.

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[1] Psalm xl. 15.

[2] St. Matt. xiv. 31.

XVI. SOME THOUGHTS AND LIGHTS.

85. Amongst the thoughts which the Venerable Father Louis de la Puente wrote with his own hand in the memorandum which has been mentioned, occur some short sentences taken from his letters, under this title: *Avisos Espirituales, sacados de la Oracion y Meditacion:* "Spiritual Lights received during Prayer and Meditation." They are as follows, and are given in the same order as in his memorandum:—

(1) Do what thou canst for God, and God will do for thee what thou canst not do.

(2) Acquit yourself of small things, and God will help thee to accomplish great ones.

(3) Do not defer the execution of thy resolutions to a later time, because if thou dost not perform what thou canst now, thou wilt each day become capable of less.

(4) Take the sweet things of this life for bitter, and the bitter for sweet, and thou wilt have peace.

(5) Have care for God, and God will have care for thee.

(6) Be liberal towards thy fellow-men, and God will be liberal towards thee.

(7) Give what is asked of thee, and God will give thee what thou askest.

(8) If thou dost desire to fulfil God's will, why dost thou trample on obedience in order to go to something else? for thou hast what thou desirest.

(9) If thou art inwardly disturbed in what thou dost perform, it is a sign that thou art aiming at something selfish.

(10) In myself nothing, in God everything.

(11) I am what is not, God is what is.

(12) True love to God prefers to suffer rather than to enjoy; and to drink the chalice of bitterness rather than that of sweetness.

(13) True love to God seeks more God's glory than its own.

(14) True love seeks to love rather than to know; and values obedience above knowledge.

(15) Endeavour to perform all that God wishes, and that only, and thou wilt have fulfilled His will.

(16) True love to God wishes rather to give than to receive; and if it desires to receive, it is in order to give.

(17) Endeavour to fulfil God's will promptly and simply, because it is His will, and in order to please Him, and thou wilt have done it on earth as it is done in heaven.

(18) Thou wilt love God, in proportion as thou hatest thyself.

(19) He truly hates himself who flies from honour and gifts, and seeks contempt and suffering.

(20) Choose as thy companions for life, poverty, contempt and suffering, for these were what Christ our Lord selected for Himself.

(21) However numerous thy occupations may be, endeavour to fulfil each with the same perfection, peace, and inward tranquillity, as if thou hadst no other thing to perform.

(22) Mortify thine anxieties and eagerness to finish one work quickly, in order to pass on to another, and every other excessive wish, if thou dost not desire that it be badly executed.

(23) Take greater heed to the services which thou hast to perform than to the favours which thou hast to receive.

(24) Eagerness to receive favours from God disqualifies us for obtaining them, for it is a sign of scant humility and little purity of intention, and it weakens our diligence in working, when we do it through excessive eagerness to receive.

(25) The truly humble man deems himself unworthy of all blessings, and deserving of all ills; unworthy of favours, and deserving of punishment.

(26) If thou dost really feel that thou deservest to be in hell, thou wilt not complain of the ills which thou dost suffer, or of the good things which are wanting to thee.

(27) What does God owe thee, or what hast thou done for Him, that thou shouldst complain when He does not grant thee what thou desirest?

(28) If thou desirest continually to remember God, thou wilt endeavour to forget thyself.

(29) God will remember thee if thou dost forget thyself.

(30) To forget myself, is to forget my own honour and advantage, health, life and consolations even spiritual, and all self-interest, except in so far as it shall be God's will for them to accrue to me, for His service and for His greater glory.

(31) Be more diligent in mortification than in contemplation, because the unmortified person seeks prayer and finds it not, whilst the mortified person seeks and finds.

(32) I have experienced that childish fear is the punishment of the proud.

(33) Justice belongs to God, and he who vainly glories in himself, and without cause, fears also vainly, and without cause.

(34) He is close to evil, who through laziness contents himself with what is least good.

(35) He is far from evil who always seeks what is most perfect.

(36) God discovers Himself to him who humbly conceals himself.

(37) God hides Himself from him who proudly displays himself.

(38) Worldly language is, to speak well of self, evil of others and never of God.

(39) Heavenly language is, to speak evil of self, good of others, and always of God and for God.

(40) Leave the letter which thou hast begun, when God calls thee, for it is better to leave it well begun than badly finished.

(41) God thus sets all in order for thee, when obedience puts all thy plans into disorder.

(42) It is the greatest misfortune to be rich in thoughts and poor in affections, rich in truths and poor in virtues.

(43) O man, *Dispone domui tuae, cras forte morieris;* put thy house in order, for to-morrow perhaps thou shalt die.

(44) It is the picture of God to do good peacefully without disturbance, lovingly without self-interest, magnanimously without presumption.

(45) Unjust steward, *Vide quid agas, cras forte reddes rationem villicationis tuae;* look to what thou art doing, for to-morrow perhaps thou wilt have to give an account of thy stewardship.

SOME EJACULATIONS WHICH THE VENERABLE FATHER LOUIS DE LA PUENTE USED FREQUENTLY TO REPEAT DURING THE DAY.

The following are found in his notes: *Diligam te sicut diligor a te:* I will love Thee, my God, as I am loved by Thee.

O anima mea, ama amorem ab aeterno te amantem: O my soul, love the divine love which loves thee from eternity.

Ostende mihi, Domine, charitatem tuam, et amorem tuum da mihi: Show me Thy infinite charity, O Lord, and grant me Thy divine love.

O Domine, aufer a me quidquid mihi obstat, ne tibi plene uniar: Remove from me, O Lord, whatever hinders my perfect union with Thee.

O dulcissime Jesu, fac me diligere crucem tuam, ut melius impleam voluntatem tuam: O sweet Jesus, give me to love Thy cross, in order that I may do Thy most holy will better.

O amantissime Jesu, fac me diligere paupertatem, opprobria, dolores, et labores, ut sine impedimento ullo placeam voluntati tuae: O dearest Jesus, grant me to love poverty, contempt, sorrows and trials, in order that I may without hindrance fulfil Thy will.

O Trinitas beatissima, rege memoriam, illustra intellectum, inflamma voluntatem, adjuva impotentiam meam, ut totus tibi plene uniar: O Blessed Trinity, direct my memory, enlighten my understanding, incline my will, and help my weakness, that I may live perfectly united with You.

Domine Jesu, da mihi pro amore tuo prospera mundi despicere, et nulla ejus adversa formidare: Good Jesus, grant me to despise, for Thy sake, what the world esteems, and not to dread what it fears and hates.

O anima mea, cogita quae Domini sunt, quomodo placeas Deo: O my soul, think of heavenly things, think how thou must please God.

O Beloved, O Love, O Eternal Lover, I love Thee, O my Lord.

MEDITATIONS COMPOSED BY THE VENERABLE FATHER LOUIS DE LA PUENTE FOR HIS OWN USE.

Although this holy man was raised by God to lofty heights of prayer and contemplation, in which he usually spent six hours daily, and wherein he received signal favours and had numerous ecstacies and visions, as is stated in his life; notwithstanding all this, he was careful to exercise himself frequently in profound meditations upon his wretchedness, upon the last things, upon the Passion of our Lord, and other truths up to the close of his life, practising himself what he wrote for the direction of souls which God has raised to the prayer of union and quiet. *It is necessary*, he says, *for these, not to omit to meditate upon the Divine Mysteries, for the favour and impulse from God which have raised them to such quiet often cease, and then it is necessary for them to employ their powers, since they are not to be like large vessels, which move only by means of the wind, but like small ships, or galleys, which, when the wind fails, are propelled by oars, and if wind and oars both fail would remain becalmed.*[1] For this purpose he compiled twelve

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[1] In the Life of Father Baltasar Alvarez, written by the Ven. F. de la Puente.

Meditations, adapted to the Purgative, Illuminative and Unitive ways, for his own use and there are found in his notes, together with the Spiritual Thoughts and Lights, and in these he exercised himself chiefly when he withdrew into retirement to make the exercises of our Father Saint Ignatius; and I have placed them here because they were selected by so great a master, they are so lively and efficacious in moving the affections towards every virtue, they are adapted to all, to beginners, to the advanced, and to the perfect; and they may serve for religious, who make the Spiritual Exercises of our Father Saint Ignatius in Retreat, and for all such as desire to have various short and efficacious considerations in which to exercise themselves.

FIRST MEDITATION.

THE END OF MAN.

FIRST POINT.

To consider the end for which I was created, namely, to love and serve God in this life, and to enjoy Him in the next, considering for this purpose three things: Who created me? God. Why? Not on account of my merits, but out of His infinite goodness. For what end? Not for His profit, but for mine. To ponder two things: first, that all true happiness, honour and enjoyment, in this life and the next, consist in loving and serving God, Who is our last end; and, on the contrary, all unhappiness, dishonour and discontent, consist in departing from this end and losing it; secondly, to ponder in detail, how this is the end of all my powers, interior and exterior, my eyes, taste, tongue, memory, understanding, will, and so on. To turn to each as if I were conversing with it; to my eyes, asking them: Do you know why God created you? It was that you may see what can help you to love and serve Him. To be ashamed at not having done so, hitherto, encouraging myself to do so henceforth, and going through the rest in the same manner. I may also consider the end for which God caused me to enter religion, namely, in order to love and serve Him with advantage and perfection, and going through the same conformity of the powers, ashamed at having neglected this hitherto, and resolving to amend henceforth.

SECOND POINT.

To consider the end for which God created other things besides man, namely, to help me to love and serve Him, in order that He may save me. For this end God created what I see with my eyes, hear with my ears, and feel, riches, gifts, friends, dignities, offices and sciences, all created by God to serve as means for loving and serving Him; yet I, out of love to these same things, have neglected to love the Giver, and, through my own fault they have become to me an occasion of lukewarmness in the love and service of my Creator. To be deeply ashamed at this, rousing myself to employ them for the end for which they were created by God. Likewise to consider the end of all the means which God has given me in religion, namely, as advantages to help me to serve Him perfectly. This is the end of my studies, my office, and my occupations. To consider, as before, that though God has given me all these things in religion as means to love Him with perfection, nevertheless, I, through excessive love to these means, have not loved God perfectly, and these very means have become to me, through my fault, an occasion of tepidity and laxity. To be ashamed, etc.

THIRD POINT.

To be indifferent to all that is created, only desiring what may help me to serve God, not wishing for health rather than sickness, honour rather than dishonour, riches rather than poverty, etc. Also, if I find myself inclined to some extreme, to see that it be towards what will help me to attain my end, namely, poverty, dishonour, the cross; examining minutely whether there reigns in my heart some affection contrary to this indifference, which warps my will, endeavouring to root it out, that my will may be indifferent as God wishes it to be. To conclude with a colloquy to our Lord, asking Him that, since He came into the world to teach man his end, the use of creatures, and the indifference with which he should regard them, He would use them to give me His light, His love, and His powers, that I may in all things seek and perform what is most perfect.

SECOND MEDITATION.

ON SINS.

FIRST POINT.

To consider the many sins which I have committed, the long chain of them, from the time when

I had the use of reason, and even since I became a religious; considering the seven capital sins of pride, gluttony, avarice, lust, anger, envy, slothfulness. Considering that I have daily committed many sins of every kind, and looking at each sort as a chain composed of numerous links. As to pride, how much vainglory, ambition, hypocrisy, boasting, and vain ostentation about learning, lineage, virtue, and every other kind of thing. To go through, in the same manner, other matters during the whole course of my life, dealing with the various kinds as if I were making a general confession before God. Then to look up to God, so justly incensed against me at seeing my insolence and stubbornness in adding sin to sin, saying with shame and confusion: *Peccavi super numerum arenae maris, et non sum dignus respicere altitudinem Coeli*:[1] "My sins are as the sand of the sea: I am unworthy to raise my eyes to heaven;" but trusting that God's infinite mercies are greater than my sins and miseries, I turn to Him and say: *Propter nomen tuum, Domine, propitiaberis peccato meo, multum est enim*:[2] "For Thy name's sake, O Lord, Thou wilt pardon my sin, for it is great."

SECOND POINT.

To consider who I am, that I should be so bold as to offend against the Majesty of so great a God by innumerable sins, going through the reasons and obligations which I have not to commit them. First, as man, that I am the work of His hands, created in His image and likeness, for which I was bound to serve my Creator; whilst instead of serving Him, I have insulted Him, defiling His image by my sins. Secondly, as a Christian, the slave of Jesus Christ, bought with His precious Blood, and bound, as a slave, to employ myself in serving this Lord; yet I have employed myself in offending Him, and serving Him neligently. Thirdly, as a religious, dedicated to His service by my profession. What more wretched than to profess the faith of a Christian, and live the life of the profane? to have the state of the religious, and to live the life of the secular? Fourthly, as a priest, and bound, as the minister of God, by greater obligations to avoid offending Him, and to set a good example to others; yet I have not acted thus, and have ever been an occasion of stumbling and scandal through my faults and sins.

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[1] Prayer of Manasses.

[2] Psalm xxiv. 11.

THIRD POINT.

To consider Who God is that I offend, and the reasons on His side why He should not be offended. First, because He is infinitely good, infinitely wise, infinitely powerful, and worthy to be loved, served, and reverenced with infinite services if that were possible; what greater evil than to offend such a great Lord, and serve Him so badly? Secondly, because He is my infinite Benefactor, bestowing upon me, most liberally, blessings infinite in number and in greatness, and never ceasing to send me signal mercies; to consider these. He is my Creator, my Preserver, my Redeemer, my Advocate, my Protector, etc.; what greater ingratitude than to displease such a great Benefactor, and instead of serving Him, to offend Him infinitely? To bear this in mind, in order to increase my confusion.

FOURTH POINT.

To consider for what I have offended God; for some bodily pleasure, for a point of worldly honour, for some temporal advantage, to gratify my own will and taste, in order to shine, or such-like things, which are of little moment and quickly vanish. Considering, next, Who it is that has been offended, and why, to recognise the gravity of my offence, and, looking at that supreme Judge, to acknowledge how just His anger is, and to imagine that He looks at me saying: *Obstupescite, coeli, duo mala fecit populus meus; me dereliquerunt, fontem aquae vivae, et foderunt sibi cisternas, cisternas dissipatas, quae continere non valent aquam:*[1] "Be astonished, O ye heavens, . . . For My people have done two evils. They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living water, and have digged to themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water."

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[1] Jerem. ii. 12, 13.

FIFTH POINT.

To consider that God permits sins, in order to display one or other of His attributes, either the severity of His justice in chastising them with eternal punishment, as we see in Lucifer and his followers, in the people of Sodom, in Judas, and many others; or His infinite mercy in forgiving them, as we see in St. Peter, in the good thief, and many others. Next, to look at my sins, and tremble that I do not know whether I shall be the object of Divine Justice, or of His mercy, a vessel of wrath and ignominy or a vessel of mercy and honour. That which is certain is that I deserve the severity of Divine Justice. Then to turn to our Lord, saying: *Sed non intres in judicium cum servo tuo:*[1] "Enter not into judgment with Thy servant:" *Domine, ne in furore tuo arguas me:*[2] "O Lord, rebuke me not in Thy indignation." To conclude with a colloquy to Christ crucified, considering His wounds as the punishment for my sins, and the medicine for them; to ask Him for forgiveness, and to meditate upon His humility and obedience, begging Him for grace in order to imitate Him. To meditate also upon the excellence of the Person Who suffers, and His innocence, how terrible this suffering is, and that it is for my sins, the punishment which I have to expect if I do not amend, since on account of them God thus chastised the innocent.

[1] Psalm cxlii. 2.

[2] *Ibid.* vi. 1.

THIRD MEDITATION.

IN ORDER TO OBTAIN CONFUSION AND CONTRITION FOR MY SINS.

FIRST POINT.

To picture to myself God as exceedingly great, reaching throughout the world, full of eyes to see what is thought and said and done in every corner of it; yet with pure eyes, which cannot behold evil without loathing. To imagine myself a worm or a spider within this Divine immensity, which is full of eyes to see what I think and say and do, and that within it, and in the sight of these Divine eyes I have committed all my past sins, and am committing my present ones, thereby provoking this Divine Majesty to just anger, loathing and disgust at my wickedness. To be ashamed of my audacity and impudence, afraid even because He has endured me in His presence. To entreat forgiveness, renewing most fervently the resolution not to offend His most pure eyes by my sins, nor by anything which I ought not to do in His presence.

SECOND POINT.

To consider how the Divine Omnipotence is in all creatures, giving them existence, and concurring with them in all their operations, so that without the Divine concurrence they would have no being, no power of acting, understanding, willing, seeing, speaking, etc. To imagine myself within this Divine Omnipotence, and that when I sinned or do sin, I use it in order to think, see, say, or do what offends it; because, so great is its goodness, that in order to preserve my liberty, it does not withhold its concurrence, even when I use it ill, and offend, as it does not withhold it from other creatures, concurring with eating, though it be for nothing but to gratify my taste, though it be prohibited, and so on with the rest. Hence I ought to be deeply ashamed of my mad boldness, in having dared to make war against God by means of His own power, and to avail myself of His help in order to injure and offend so great a Lord. To be deeply impressed with the infinite goodness of this great God, Who has afforded me His concurrence so promptly and liberally for all I have chosen, even though it be to offend Him. To renew my fervent resolution never again to use it for anything contrary to His divine will and pleasure.

THIRD POINT.

To consider God, in relation to His creatures, as infinitely good, and therefore infinitely lovable, infinitely loving, and an universal Benefactor to all, which are the three motives for loving any one. It follows, that if God be infinitely good and beautiful, if He loves me with infinite love, if He bestows upon me infinite benefits, it is clear that He is deserving of all possible love from me. To accept this, which is plain and certain, and to look at myself, and consider what I did in sinning. I hated and despised Him Who is infinitely lovable, Who loved me infinitely, and was my infinite Benefactor. Hence to be deeply ashamed, and frightened at my ingratitude, blindness, and hardness of heart, and to renew my desires and resolutions to love this supreme goodness henceforth, employing myself ever in praising, blessing, obeying and serving God for what He is, with true contrition for the evil I have committed. I might also go through the benefits, both general and particular, which I have received from this infinite goodness, considering how each of my sins is contrary to them all, and deducing motives to abhor them more, and to confirm me in the resolution not to commit them in future.

FOURTH POINT.

To consider the severity of Divine Justice, and how terrible it is in the punishment of sins committed against infinite goodness. God is infinitely good, but He is also infinitely just; displaying the severity of His justice against those who have not profited by His goodness and mercy. In order to strengthen myself in this truth, I can cite various instances: First, the sin of the Angels, and its terrible and severe punishment by God. He deprived them of all the gratuitous gifts which He had conferred upon them of grace, charity, knowledge and virtue. He cast them out of the heaven where He had created them in His image and likeness, perfect in the natural order and in the supernatural, with the promise of everlasting beatitude if they did not offend Him. He flung them into hell, where they remain in grievous contempt, torment and misery, burning in everlasting fires. Secondly, the sin of our First Parents, created in God's image and likeness, with grace and original justice, without death or pain, in a Paradise of delights; yet they were deprived of all this on account of one sin, and Adam and all his descendants became subject to death, and to all the miseries which we experience. Thirdly, the Deluge, by which God punished the sins of the whole world, and buried many in hell. Fourthly, the punishment of the inhabitants of Sodom, who were burnt, together with their city, for their sin. Fifthly, by what happened to Dathan and Abiram, whom the earth swallowed up for the sin which they had committed. To stir myself up by the thought of these and similar punishments to shame and true contrition for my sins, fearing to offend this great God anew, and resolving to serve Him more faithfully in future.

FOURTH MEDITATION.

ON SELF-KNOWLEDGE.

Nisi conversi fueritis, et efficiamini sicut parvuli, non intrabitis in Regnum Caelorum (St. Matt. xviii. 3): "Unless you be converted, and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."

FIRST POINT.

Having placed myself in the presence of God, to imagine myself as a new-born child, which can neither wash itself, nor raise itself if it falls, nor stand unless upheld, nor move a step; if it be hungry, it cannot feed itself unless food be given to it; if it suffer cold, it cannot warm itself; if it is in danger from enemies, it can neither free nor defend itself. In short, as regards its sufferings, it neither knows what it needs to remedy them, nor how to ask for it; the love and pity of the mother supplies all this with her maternal care. I am as a child, and as such should apply to myself the six aforesaid things. I am defiled with sins, and cannot cleanse myself from them unless God cleanses me, and beautifies me by His grace; if I fall to earth by affection to earthly things, faint-heartedness, or other passions, I cannot raise myself unless God raises me (to reflect upon myself, considering myself filthy and fallen); if at one time I stood erect with some degree of virtue or devotion, I could neither remain upright nor advance without God's help; if I feel the hunger of some good desire, I cannot satisfy it without God's assistance; if I am cold through tepidity, or tried by my enemies, I cannot liberate myself unless God liberates me. Finally, I can neither pray, nor ask for what I need, and am so blind as not to know it, or to be able to remedy it; therefore God remedies this grievous evil, in His infinite pity and love, which exceed that of a mother, guarding us in His providence with paternal care, for though the mother may forget her child, God will never forget His own. Hence I try to draw affections of humility and shame, self-distrust, and fear at my own weakness; accompanied, nevertheless, by affections of love and gratitude to God, my Lord and Father, of courage, and trust in His divine assistance, meditating upon the necessity of having frequent recourse to Him in all things, as my sole Benefactor and my most loving Father.

SECOND POINT.

To consider the mistakes I make concerning this spiritual childhood, and the perils and losses ensuing therefrom. First, I often think that I am free from sin, and detached from earthly affections; whilst in God's sight I am foul and earthly, so that I could say with Saint Paul: *Nihil mihi conscius sum, sed non in hoc justificatus sum, qui autem judicat me, Dominus est*:[1] "For I am not conscious to myself of anything, yet am I not hereby justified: but He that judgeth me is the Lord." And with Saint John in his Apocalypse: *Dicis, quod dives sum, et locupletatus, et nullius egeo, et nescis, quia tu es miser, et miserabilis, et pauper, et caecus, et nudus*:[1] "Thou sayest: I am rich, and made wealthy, and have need of nothing, and knowest not that thou art wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind and naked." We are always poor and naked before God, even when our conscience does not accuse us of sin. Secondly, when I possess some virtue or devotion, I readily persuade myself that it will be lasting and that I shall persevere; whilst, on the contrary, I lose it completely in the twinkling of an eye: *Qui se existimat stare, videat ne cadat*:[2] "Wherefore he that thinketh himself to stand, let him take heed lest he fall." Thirdly, I propose to myself great things, imagining that I shall be able to perform them, and that I shall not be overcome by temptations and difficulties; yet immediately I fail and am worsted: *Ego dixi in abundantia mea, non movebor in aeternum; avertisti faciem tuam a me, et factus sum conturbatus*:[3] "In my abundance I said: I shall never be moved. . . . Thou turnedst away Thy face from me and I became troubled." Because God does not assist the proud with His special protection, who think that they can do by themselves, but the little ones who are humble and think themselves incapable of anything; to the former He closes the doors of heaven, to the latter He opens them that they may enter into the justice, the peace, and the joy of the Holy Spirit.

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[1] 1 Cor. iv. 4.

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[1] Apoc. iii. 17.

[2] 1 Cor. x. 12.

[3] Psalm xxix. 7, 9.

THIRD POINT.

To consider that a child cares not whether it be honoured as the son of a king, or despised as the son of a slave, whether it be placed in a soft and luxurious bed in a sumptuous palace, or in a poor stable; whether it be enveloped in rich clothes and silk coverings, or in those which are coarse and common; what is given to it, it takes; it understands nothing of all this, and is relieved of all care concerning it, abandoning all to the care of its mother and its nurse. Such must I be before God, giving up all inordinate anxiety about honour, riches, poverty, self-interest, or comfort, leaving all to God, Who is my Father, my Mother, and my Nurse, taking what He gives or permits. *Jacta cogitatum tuum in Dominum, et ipse te enutriet*:[1] "Cast thy care upon the Lord and He shall sustain thee." Comprehending, that if any honour, advantage or profit should come to me, it is because I have a good Father and a good Mother, God, to Whom it must be attributed; and when any contempt or trial comes to me it is on account of my own wickedness, and should be attributed to my sins.

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[1] Psalm liv. 23.

FIFTH MEDITATION.

ON THE TWO LIVES, TEMPORAL AND ETERNAL.

FIRST POINT.

Before all things I must throughly enter into this fundamental truth of our holy faith, that beyond this temporal life, which will last no longer than what we see with our eyes, there remains for us another, which will endure for ever, as long as God himself shall endure. Each of these lives has its own blessings and evils. I must therefore consider how all the good and bad things of this present life are temporal, and can last no longer than that life itself, also, that they are mutable; health may easily change to sickness, riches to poverty, honour to dishonour, joy to sorrow, comfort to torment, and the reverse. The good and bad things of the next life are everlasting and unchangeable; if that life commences with happiness, honour, joy, and abundance, it will possess them for ever. If it commences with unhappiness, ignorance, poverty and misery, they will also remain unchanged for ever. Then making a comparison between these good and evil things, to endeavour to convince myself that nothing deserves to be loved but what is eternal, or is a means towards obtaining such; also, that there is nothing worthy of hatred, except what is eternal, or which leads thereto, according to our Lord's words: *Nolite timere eos, qui occidunt corpus, animam autem non* *possunt occidere; potius timete eum, qui postquam occiderit corpus, potest mittere animam in gehennam ignis*:[1] "Fear ye not them that kill the body, and are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him that can destroy both soul and body into hell."

SECOND POINT.

To consider how this temporal life has been given to us by God, in order that in it, with our own freedom, and His divine grace, we may win eternal riches; therefore, we may, through our own fault, lose them, and incur everlasting evils, because, he who disordinately loves temporal goods, or shuns temporal ills, contrary to what God has commanded, will lose eternal blessings, and incur eternal evils: much more will he who for God's sake despises temporal things, and uses them all according to the divine will, escape from eternal evils. Then, to consider what folly it is to lose, through love of earthly honour, that which is eternal, and so on of the rest; on the other hand, what sound wisdom it is to hate honour and temporal advantage in order to obtain that which is eternal, and to embrace dishonour and temporal suffering in order to avoid that which is eternal.

THIRD POINT.

. To consider how short and uncertain a platform this life is, in order to win or to lose everlasting life and happiness, since I know not whether in my own case it will terminate in a year, a month, or a day; perhaps upon this very day depends all my happiness or misery for eternity. To ponder deeply the saying: *O momentum, a quo pendet aeternitas!* "O moment upon which depends eternity;" and also: *Jam securis ad radicem arboris posita est:*[1] "For now the axe is laid to the root of the tree;" and *Ubicumque ceciderit lignum, sive ad Austrum sive ad Aquilonem, ibi erit:*[2] "If the tree fall to the south, or to the north, in what place soever it shall fall, there shall it be," as long as God shall be God. To endeavour, with these considerations, to spend each day as if it were to be my last.

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[1] St. Matt. x 28.

SIXTH MEDITATION.

ON HELL.

FIRST POINT.

To consider that hell is a perpetual prison, full of fire, and innumerable torments, for the punishment of those who die in mortal sin; where everything is eternal, because the abode is eternal: the condemned are eternal, for they cannot put an end themselves; the fire which burns is eternal, it remains without either consuming or being consumed; God's decree is eternal, immutable, and inexorable: *In inferno nulla est redemptio.*

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[1] St. Matt. iii. 10.

[2] Eccles. xi. 3.

SECOND POINT.

To consider the pains of the exterior senses, sight, hearing, taste, smell, and touch, as Saint Ignatius puts them in his Spiritual Exercises, going through the senses one by one, dwelling especially upon that of touch, in the several members, to which fire causes particular suffering.

THIRD POINT.

To consider the torment of the interior powers, the imagination and memory, which remain fixed in the midst of these punishments and evils, without the slightest diversion. The understanding is for ever pondering and appreciating these evils, whence arises the *vermis conscientiae*, the worm of conscience which so greviously torments the lost.

The will and the appetite weigh them down, and they suffer the violence of their passions, which are their executioners; sadness, fear, anger, rage, impatience, despair, hatred of God, of the saints, of themselves, and of others.

FOURTH POINT.

To consider the pain of loss (which is the greatest), and the grievous torment caused to the lost by being deprived for ever of the sight of God, their last end, and of everlasting rest and happiness in the company of Christ, of the Blessed Virgin, of the angels, and of the blessed. To increase this the understanding will be quickened, so as to realize more fully how, for a passing pleasure, their torment has come to be unspeakable.

SEVENTH MEDITATION.

ON GLORY.

FIRST POINT.

To consider that glory is an everlasting state full of every blessing which the just can desire, and free from every ill which he could fear; to enumerate all the good things of this life which are most perfect, and to think that they will all be found there with incomparable fulness, honour, riches, comfort, health, friends, dignities, peace of conscience, holiness, etc. To enumerate all the evils of pain, wretchedness, guilt, and to remember that all these will be absent: there will be neither cold nor heat; war nor pestilence; neither sickness, nor poverty, nor shame, nor envy, nor anger, nor vice, nor temptation, nor guilt, nor fear of death, etc. And all this is to endure for ever. To contrast this state with hell from which it differs from it, as white does from black, and also to compare it with this life, that we may desire it earnestly, instead of this miserable one.

SECOND POINT.

To consider the glory of the three spiritual powers, memory, understanding, and will. The memory will be filled with joy at the remembrance of the past, the penances, the good works, the dangers endured, and the battles fought; and also with the apprehension of present blessings which they can neither forget nor cease to relish, but without satiety, and with the expectation of what is to come, the favours which they are constantly to receive from God for all eternity. The understanding rejoices in the clear vision of the divine essence and the Trinity of Persons, in which vision Beatitude consists, and in that of Christ our Lord, true God and true Man, etc.; also in the fresh revelations and illuminations which it is ever receiving. The will is filled with exceeding love to God, with the highest delight in seeing and possessing Him, united with Him in an everlasting union, inseparable and ineffable. Hence to deduce desires to attain to this state, and begin henceforth to relish it, perfecting my memory, my understanding, and my will, and employing these powers in thinking of God, in knowing Him, and in loving Him.

THIRD POINT.

To consider the glory of the inward senses, the imagination and the appetite, beholding them so calm, so restrained, and so directed to God, and free from all distraction, from all passion, all anger, all sadness, all fear; filled with the most delightful imaginations and affections of love, joy, pleasure, peace, etc.

FOURTH POINT.

To consider the glory of the body, and of the outward senses: the sight will be occupied in beholding the beautiful bodies of the blessed, especially that of Christ and of the Blessed Virgin; the hearing in listening to celestial music, which delights and entrances; the smell and the taste in the most perfect objects of those senses; the touch and the whole body most joyful with the four properties of glory, impassibility, clarity, agility, and subtilty, together with immortality and eternity. From this I produce affections and desires of mortifying all my senses, seeing how abundantly such mortification is requited.

EIGHTH MEDITATION.

ON THREE PLACES—HELL, HEAVEN, AND EARTH.

FIRST POINT.

To suppose that God has placed me in this world between heaven and hell, as in a house of probation, and that it concerns me greatly to consider what takes place in these three places. Hell is for the wicked only; the severity of Divine Justice displays itself there, punishing and tormenting them for their sins. There are found all the evils of this life, but in an incomparably higher degree, and with everlasting duration. These can be discussed one by one. This abode is also devoid of all the blessings of this life, corporal and spiritual, without the slightest hope of ever again enjoying them; and above all, there are found impatience, wrath, despair, and hatred of God, and blasphemy against His Holy Name, etc. This consideration should produce great fear of Divine Justice, together with great courage to suffer, and to avoid sin by all possible means, it being the cause which leads to this place.

SECOND POINT.

The second place, which is opposed to this abode, is heaven, which is destined for the good only. There God displays His mercy and generosity to the just, rewarding them with every kind of consolation. This abode is free from all the ills of this life, and from all fear of returning thereto, and this for ever: it contains all the blessings which we see and enjoy here, in indescribable excess, and wonderful to behold, and these are found united with that Lord Who is *Omne bonum, et unicum bonum*, our all and only good, and in the love and delight of seeing Him we are happy and blessed. Hence should arise lively desires to arrive at this abode, together with the hope of obtaining it, and in order to do so, to begin immediately to imitate the life of the blessed when they were living this mortal life, regarding God as my highest and sole Good, and directing to Him all my love.

THIRD POINT.

The third abode, placed between the two former, is earth, which is common to both good and bad. Here God displays both justice and mercy; but principally mercy, since if He punishes it is in order to pardon, desiring that all should be saved. To consider that whilst I remain in this abode I am ever in danger, and that the remedy is to lay hold of God, looking at His justice and His mercy, heaven and hell, ever dreading His rigorous judgment, turning everything to my profit and security, and praising Him for all: *Misericordiam et justitiam cantabo tibi, Domine:*[1] "Mercy and judgment I will sing to Thee, O Lord."

NINTH MEDITATION.

THE ETERNAL KINGDOM COMPARED WITH A TEMPORAL KINGDOM.

FIRST POINT.

To consider Christ appointed by the Eternal Father King over all men; but widely different in temporal matters from other kings of this world, for He lived in poverty, contempt, labour and suffering, but as to spiritual things, He was filled with ineffable riches of power, charity, wisdom, generosity, together with all the other gifts and qualities of a most perfect King. To rejoice in having such a King and gratefully to acknowledge Him Who gave Him to me, and striving with all my might to become intimate with His Majesty.

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[1] Psalm c. 1.

SECOND POINT.

To consider the address which He makes to His subjects: It is My will to make war against My enemies, the devil, the world and the flesh, to destroy sin, to win souls, and so to enter triumphantly into the kingdom of my Eternal Father. He who desires to follow Me in this undertaking, must live as I lived, labour as I laboured, imitate Me in what I did, that according to his work he may receive the reward. Here I must consider how just and reasonable this proposal is, that the subject should live like his King, and labour as He did; and this to be rewarded. Then I must consider how Christ lived when upon earth, and I shall find that His life was all spent in poverty, the cross, obedience, prayer, watching, and fasting, with perseverance until His death. Then to form lively resolutions to imitate this Lord, to accompany Him in the undertaking to which He invites me, and to obtain the reward which He offers me.

THIRD POINT.

To consider three classes of subjects. Some pay no heed to this call; and to consider how unreasonable and how deserving of punishment they are, for not following so powerful and so liberal a King, and so great a benefactor. Others offer themselves to follow Him, but stop short at their own honour, convenience, and advantage, and content themselves with imitating Him in what is indispensable for salvation; to consider that though these do well, they run much risk, and their reward will be small. Others, lastly, offer themselves to follow Him perfectly in all things, living humbly, renouncing riches, pleasures and self-will, and embracing the contempt and the cross of Christ; such are religious, who will obtain a large reward. To rejoice at the favour which God has shown us, and animate ourselves to imitate Him daily with greater perfection, for we know how faithful He will be in fulfilling His promises; and for this purpose, to resolve not to resist His inspirations, nor turn a deaf ear to the inward indications by which He is daily calling us to this higher perfection.

TENTH MEDITATION.

THE INCARNATION.

Upon the words: *Sic Deus dilexit mundum, ut Filium suum unigenitum daret* (St. John iii. 16): "For God so loved the world as to give His only-begotten Son."

FIRST POINT.

To consider what the world is which God so loved. It is a collection of men, the sons of the earthly Adam, all conceived in original sin, from which as from their source, proceed other innumerable and most grievous sins against God, on account of which men deserve to be hated and forsaken by Him, to be deprived of all the temporal blessings which they enjoy, and to be punished with everlasting torments in hell fire. In the place of all this, God, solely out of His own goodness, and apart from all self-interest, loves His enemy, does good to him who offends Him so grievously, and instead of depriving him of temporal blessings, desires to free him from all evils and sins, adding to the good things he possesses infinite other blessings. Then to consider myself as a particle in the world, deserving to be hated and punished by God; instead of which I am loved and favoured by Him. Hence to kindle in me desires of loving such goodness, and acknowledging such favour, imitating this liberal and disinterested manner of loving.

SECOND POINT.

To consider the means which God selected in order to display His love to the world, for though there were, in the riches of His eternal wisdom, infinite ways of freeing mankind and displaying His love, and which, though hidden from us, were well known to His Majesty, He chose not merely a good way, but the most excellent and the best of all for the greater honour and advantage to the world, giving us the best which He possessed, His only-begotten Son, in order that, having become man, He might dwell amongst men in this world, might redeem them and heal them. To regard myself as amongst those who are loved and healed, and who ought to live as such in the world: *Qui dilexit me*:[1] "Who loved me;" and seeing myself beloved by this Lord, to burn with love and with desires to show how fervently I love Him, performing, in His service, not only what is good, but the best that I can possibly accomplish, giving myself wholly to Him who gave Himself wholly to me.

THIRD POINT.

To consider the innumerable things included in this gift: wherefore, Saint Paul says, that in giving us His Son together with Him He gave us all things: He gave us His grace, His virtues, His heaven, His eternal blessings, His protection, and the Holy Spirit, Who dwells in us, so that the whole Trinity might dwell in the just. Moreover, to consider that in giving us His Son and His merits, He gave us the pledge and sure hope that He will give us what He has promised, and hear our prayers, provided that we believe in His Son by living faith, believing what He taught, doing what He commanded, and living as He lived. Hence I should greatly encourage myself to believe in this Lord and to obey Him in all things, in order to enjoy such inestimable blessings, dwelling particularly upon the fact that He Who is infinite goodness bestows infinite gifts, with infinite love, upon those who are infinitely unworthy of them.

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[1] Gal. ii. 20.

FOURTH POINT.

To consider the readiness and satisfaction with which the only-begotten Son of God consented to come into this world in order to heal it, making Himself our Brother, like unto us in flesh and blood, hiding the form of God and assuming that of a servant in order to show His infinite charity, and to teach us true humility. To rejoice greatly in having such a Brother, encouraging myself to follow His example, meditating upon the words of Saint Paul: *Quia ergo pueri communicaverunt carni et sanguini, et ipse similiter participavit eisdem: propter quam causam non confundi-*

tur fratres eos vocare:[1] "Therefore, because the children were partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself in like manner hath been partaker of the same;" and also: *Exinanivit semetipsum formam servi accipiens:*[2] "He emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant."

ELEVENTH MEDITATION.

THE CARRYING OUT OF THE INCARNATION.

FIRST POINT.

To consider how the Eternal Father, knowing various ways of carrying into execution His decree that His Son should become man, either by giving Him a glorious body, such as in fact He now possesses in heaven, or one immortal and impassible as in the state of innocence, or creating a perfect and complete body of clay as He created that of Adam, chose none of these, but that He should become man, being born of a mother with passible and mortal flesh, subject to the same miseries as other men, to hunger, cold, heat, fatigue, suffering, and even death: *Misit Filium suum factum ex muliere:*[3] "God sent His Son, made of a woman;" *Debuit per omnia fratribus assimilari:*[4] "It behoved Him in all things to be made like unto His brethren." Hence I must reflect that as the Eternal Father chose that His Son should become man, subject to the miseries of man, notwithstanding His right as the Son of God to be free from such, and to have eternal joy and repose, I ought to correspond with and acknowledge this favour, truly striving that I may imitate His dear Son better.

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[1] Heb. ii. 14.

[2] Philip. ii. 7.

[3] Gal. iv. 4.

[4] Heb ii. 17.

SECOND POINT.

To consider how the Eternal Father willed that His Son should be, as to His soul, filled with all graces and virtues, seeing clearly from the first moment the Divine Essence, and in it the creatures of the world together with all the works which they perform. This most blessed soul looked particularly at three things: First, at the infinite goodness of God, and the infinite benefits which He had communicated to it, thereby kindling a fervent love of divine goodness, and longing for opportunities to display the refinement of this love. Secondly, its eyes were fixed upon the numberless sins and miseries of mankind, His brothers according to the flesh, sorrowing deeply for the injuries committed by them against His Eternal Father, and the harm done to themselves. From this pity arose a strong desire to heal them. Thirdly, its eyes were fixed upon the will of the Eternal Father, which willed that He should undertake this cure, so that without further delay or deliberation, with immeasurable love, He offered Himself to redeem men, to satisfy thereby the deep debt owing to His Eternal Father, repairing His honour, redeeming His sons, and obeying His right and holy will: *Tunc dixi, ecce venio ut faciam voluntatem tuam Deus*:[1] "Then said I: Behold I come: . . . that I should do Thy will, O God." From all this, to produce similar affections and resolutions in order to imitate Christ, loving that infinite goodness, longing for opportunities of showing my love, and offering myself to fulfil His divine will.

THIRD POINT.

To consider how the Eternal Father, seeing the will of His dear Son ready and desirous to redeem the world, He, in that same instant, revealed to that most holy soul all the means to be used to perform the office of Redeemer, living in poverty, contempt, sufferings and trials, until He should die upon the Cross. He unfolded to Him the whole course of His life, how He was to be born in a stable, to be circumcised, to flee into Egypt, to work as a carpenter, to preach, to fast, and to pray; over and above this, the course of His Passion, from the Garden to the Sepulchre, concealing no act or circumstance. That most holy soul accepted it all, with the same love and readiness, offering to perform it until the last jot and tittle, it appearing small compared with what it desired to do. He persevered in this determination until He could say upon the Cross: *Consum-*

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[1] Heb. x 7.

matum est:[1] "It is consummated;" and *Ut cognoscat mundus quia diligo Patrem, et sicut mandatum dedit mihi, sic facio:*[2] "That the world may know that I love the Father: And as the Father hath given Me commandment, so do I." This desire was so strong that the delay in satisfying it was to Him a heavy cross, that ever lay upon Him. I should reflect upon all this in order gratefully to acknowledge this will and desire of Christ, endeavouring to imitate Him by performing all that I know to be His pleasure.

FOURTH POINT.

To consider how the blessed soul of Christ, in the first moment of the Incarnation, saw me, amongst other creatures, and beholding me conceived in sin, subject to such miseries, passions, and dangers, pitied and loved me tenderly, and gladly offered to the Eternal Father all those sufferings which He was to endure during His life, for me in particular, longing earnestly for my salvation, according to St. Paul's words: *Qui dilexit me, et tradidit semetipsum pro me:*[3] "Who loved me and delivered Himself for me." Here I should pause, weighing this love to me, and considering my obligation to this Lord, for all that He has done and suffered for me, encouraging myself to serve Him truly henceforth, and to correspond with such love.

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[1] St. John xix. 30.

[2] *Ibid.* xiv. 31.

[3] Gal. ii. 20.

TWELFTH MEDITATION.

IN WHICH IS TAUGHT THE METHOD OF MEDITATING UPON THE MYSTERIES OF CHRIST, THE NATIVITY, THE CIRCUMCISION, ETC.

The composition of place should be to place our Lord before me as performing the work or occupied with the mystery upon which I am to meditate, and to consider three things relating to it: First, the act, or exterior work which our Lord is performing; secondly, the inward disposition with which He performs it; thirdly, the end which He aims at in performing it.

FIRST POINT.

I will meditate upon the exterior work of our Lord in His Nativity, in which, as in the other mysteries, I shall find most strikingly set forth the very opposite to what the world professes and values, namely, the avoidance of honour, position, comfort, and riches; the welcoming of contempt, troubles, sorrows, and poverty, and each of these most perfectly. For this He rejected Nazareth and the comforts which He might have had there, and chose to be born in a stable at Bethlehem, that He might endure the greatest discomfort. Therefore I should reflect upon my outward acts and be ashamed at finding them so conformed to those of the world, and so contrary to those of Christ, and rouse myself to imitate Him.

SECOND POINT.

To consider the inward disposition with which Christ carried out this work, so as to be moved to strong affection for the virtue which He practised therein; this, together with the exterior, was most perfect, yet it appeared small compared with what Christ desired, and was far surpassed by His wishes. Hence He neglected not one jot or tittle of what the Eternal Father commanded. Therefore He said: *Cibus meus est, ut faciam voluntat emejus, qui misit me ut perficiam opus ejus*:[1] "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, that I may perfect His work." To endeavour to labour in this manner so fully exemplified in Christ, that all my works may be perfect in imitation of His.

THIRD POINT.

To consider the end aimed at by Christ in each work, which is to supply an example for our imitation: *Exemplum enim dedi vobis ut quemadmodum ego feci, ita et vos faciatis*:[2] "For I have given you an example, that as I have done to you, so you do also." To consider the pleasure which it affords

[1] St. John iv. 34.

[2] St. John xiii. 15.

our Lord when men profit by His example; and on the other hand, what an occasion of pain it is (if He were capable of such) when they heed it not. To endeavour to give Him this pleasure by my works, imitating His example and avoiding all occasion of displeasure to Him by the disregard of it.

In these twelve meditations this great spiritual master included in a new and wonderful manner the three ways, the purgative, illuminative, and imitative, so that spiritual persons possess in this brief compendium matter wherewith to exercise themselves in each of them, in imitation of this illustrious man.

A LETTER OF THE VENERABLE FATHER LOUIS DE LA PUENTE TO A SERVANT OF GOD,

Teaching the signs of true and perfect love in which perfection consists.

As the complement of this treatise, which may well be called a compendium of what is contained in the ascetical works of the Venerable Father Louis de la Puente, it was thought useful to add this letter, because it states with exceeding clearness what are the foundations of true spirituality.

Father Charles Neumayr, of the Society of Jesus, in his posthumous work entitled, *Idea Theologiae asceticae scientiam Sanctorum exhibens* (Rome, Alexander Monaldi, 1839), considering the principles and rules of each of the three ways, the purgative, illuminative, and unitive, which are the subject of his work, in treating of the second, reduces it, after stating certain general principles concerning it, to the supply of rules for protecting oneself in praying, working, and suffering; this being, according to his opinion, the whole ascetical theology of the illuminative way. The ground for this idea, and, as it were, the argument, is as follows: The perfection of the illuminative way consisting in the practice of all the virtues, and the theological virtues being the foundation, root, and end of them, it ensues, that the more we excel in the practice and perfection of faith, hope, and charity, the further we advance in this way; also, that these virtues are respectively nourished, developed, and perfected by praying, working, and suffering well; hence results as the legitimate conclusion that upon the perfection of these three things depends the whole of our progress and perfection.

1. The highest grace and love of God be ever in your heart. Our Lord dwells in your soul as a master in his own house, in order to fill and occupy your memory with holy thoughts, your understand-

ing with heavenly lights, and your will with divine affections and desires, in order that you may not think, understand, desire, nor love anything but this most good and excellent Lord and Father, and that you may desire what He desires, and love what He loves. Since the tokens of true and perfect love are *praying, working,* and *suffering,* exercise yourself during your whole life in these, in order to please this divine Lover, Who is worthy to be loved with infinite love, if you were capable of such.

2. It is a sign of great love to delight to be ever in the presence of God, conversing with Him, praising Him, blessing Him, rejoicing that He is what He is, acknowledging the mercies received, asking for others in order to love Him more, sorrowing because of loving Him so little, and at the small number of those who love Him, and desiring that all should love and serve Him as He deserves. This I call *praying.* Still, it is a surer sign of perfect love to delight to employ oneself in doing what God commands, neglecting not one jot nor tittle of His law, not contenting oneself with obeying the precepts, but also fulfilling the counsels according to one's state, and endeavouring to do not only what is good, but what is best, what will give greater pleasure to God, and be to His greater glory, and this I call *working.* However, the surest sign of pure and perfect love is to rejoice to *suffer* when this divine Lover wishes and allows us to suffer, whether it be in property, honour, health or life, and above all to endure the contradiction of men, be they friends or enemies,

foreign or domestic, since this is a secret and prolonged martyrdom, a certain token of divine love, which is a fire so fully kindled that these floods of tribulations cannot extinguish it, but rather feed and increase it.

3. If you desire to be perfect, exercise yourself in the three things mentioned above, for you will have abundant opportunities for each. I think that it would help you much in all this to go to confession to Father Siguenza, for it requires a personal interview to treat of it, which God will grant if He sees fit. Commend me to our Lord. Oviedo, March 7, 1597.

The servant of God to whom this letter was addressed was Francisca Velez de la Peña, who lived at Valladolid, and died in the odour of sanctity. In the *Life of the Venerable Father Louis de la Puente*, book i. chap. xvii. No. 10, is given an account of a vision which she had, and in which she was given to understand with what celerity and fervour her Venerable Father in Jesus Christ was advancing towards perfection in the spiritual life. We now give her answer to the above letter.

Letter in Answer to the Preceding.

May God preserve to the end the spirit which in His infinite goodness He has given to your paternity, and communicate to you every day more and more of His heavenly gifts. It may well be inferred, Father, that our Lord dwells in your soul, since you utter such zealous words concerning the honour of His Majesty, words full of wholesome doctrine for my soul, containing the blessed teaching with which your paternity instructs me, that I may be your sincere and humble pupil, and may our Lord, Who has inspired me with the desire to serve Him, make me such, that I may be pleasing in His eyes.

I received the letter from your paternity on Easter Monday, with much joy, for it suited such a feast; and may God grant me strength and diligence to do what it teaches, because I understand such to be the highest perfection of life. I can truly say that though I have read various books which treat of this subject, I have not found elsewhere such light to know what perfection is, as I have done by these three things, in which your paternity orders me to exercise myself, praying, working, and suffering, neither how it is to be understood, nor in what it consists: so much does this explanation include. Praised be our Lord Jesus Christ for all, for Whose glory I intend ever to exercise myself henceforth in the performance of them. These shall be my study, my lesson, and my meditation, that I may attain to greater recollection, and offer this soul to our Lord, as He wishes, detached from all creatures. O when shall this be? O that it might be to-day rather than to-morrow! Help me, Father, by your prayers and your teaching, and may it be true that a good master trains a good disciple. Part of the road has been already trodden: there is a groundwork of crosses upon which to build, and though they appear light, they have a secret, I know not what, more powerful than a thousand men. As their Master is powerful and a great artificer, He will give them all He chooses and as He chooses. Blessed and praised be God for ever, that even in these crosses He manifests His infinite mercy by not rendering our strength unequal to bear those which He has prepared for us. Praised be this compassionate and loving Father. May we love Him with our whole heart. O my King, my sole good! O that I might love Thee with infinite love, that I might give Thee all, withholding nothing!

LAUS DEO.

SPIRITUAL RETREAT

OF THE

VENERABLE FATHER

CLAUDE DE LA COLOMBIÈRE

OF THE SOCIETY OF JESUS.

CLAUDE DE LA COLOMBIÈRE was born at St. Symphorien d'Ozon, in France, between Lyons and Vienna, in 1641, and in his twentieth year he entered the noviceship of the Society of Jesus. When his training was complete, he was set apart by his superiors for the work of preaching, and in this apostolic ministry he was gifted with a remarkable unction. When he had been fifteen years in Religion and was beginning the thirty-fourth year of his age, he made the Exercises of St. Ignatius for thirty days in his tertianship. In the course of them he was led to make a vow, by which he bound himself under pain of sin to observe all the Rules of the Society. The notes made by him in this retreat, and the reasons that moved him to make this vow, are given in the pages that follow.

In the same year, 1674, Father Claude was appointed Superior of the House of the Society at

Paray-le-Monial. His coming had been patiently looked for by the great servant of God, Blessed Margaret Mary Alacoque. Our Lord had said to her: " Be calm, I will send you My servant," and on seeing Father Claude for the first time, an interior voice said to her: " This is he whom I send to you." After the great revelation to Blessed Margaret Mary of the merciful designs and intentions of the Sacred Heart, the saint asked of our Lord the means of doing what He commanded, and the answer she received was: " Address yourself to My servant, Father de la Colombière, and tell him from Me to do his best to establish this devotion, and to give this pleasure to My Heart." At Father Claude's request Blessed Margaret Mary wrote down for him these words and several other things that concerned himself for the glory of God. On the 21st June, 1675, being the Friday after the Octave of Corpus Christi, Father Claude consecrated his life to the service of the Sacred Heart.

In the following year Father de la Colombière was appointed preacher to Mary of Modena, then Duchess of York, afterwards Queen of England. He arrived in London on the 13th October, 1676, and took up his abode at St. James's Palace, where he lived an austere and retired life. He had, however, many opportunities of showing his zeal for souls and for the glory of the Sacred Heart, " with a devotion to which," he was able to write in 1677, he " had inspired many persons in England." Father Claude's work in this country was suddenly brought to a close by the outburst of fanaticism caused by the imaginary Plot, to which the name of its inventor, Titus Oates, was given. By the intervention of Louis XIV., whose subject he was, Father de la Colombière was liberated from prison, but he was judicially banished from England, which country he called "the land of crosses." His weak chest could ill bear the hard work and rough usage that had fallen to his lot, and he only survived by two years his return to France. He had at first the charge, as spiritual Father, of the scholastics at Lyons, and afterwards he was sent back to Paray, where Blessed Margaret Mary told him that it was the will of our Lord that he should make the sacrifice of his life. He died on the 15th February, 1682, and a few hours after his death Blessed Margaret Mary said that he was "in no need of prayers, having a high place in Heaven, through the goodness and mercy of the Sacred Heart of Jesus." The cause of the beatification of the Venerable Claude de la Colombière has been begun, and the apostolic process is completed.

The *Spiritual Retreat* of Father de la Colombière was first printed in 1684, and has been reprinted in France very frequently. It has also appeared in Italian (1707) and in German (1720). An English translation was published in Dublin, by James Duffy, in 1863, with a Preface by the Right Reverend Monsignor Manning, D.D., afterwards Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster.

This little book had the honour of being highly praised and recommended by Blessed Margaret Mary. In a letter written by her to Mère de

Soudeilles at Moulins, dated 4th July, 1686, after speaking of the devotion to the Sacred Heart, she says: " We have found this devotion in the book of the *Retreat* of the Reverend Father de la Colombière, who is venerated as a saint. I am not sure whether you know it, or whether you have the book, for it would give me a pleasure to give it to you." And, again writing to the same person on the 15th September of the same year: " You could hardly believe the good effects that this devotion produces in souls that have had the happiness of learning it by the means of this holy man, who was himself altogether dedicated to it, and only breathed in order to make it loved, honoured and glorified. This it was, I think, that raised him to such a height of perfection in so short a space of time. . . . You can scarcely believe the great devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus that our Sisters of Semur en l'Auxois testify that they have drawn from reading the book of the *Retreat* of the Rev. Father de la Colombière. . . . I do not know whether you have the *Sermons* of this good Father de la Colombière. They are in four volumes, and all who read them are charmed."

In her letters and in her private devotions Blessed Margaret Mary continued always to treat the Venerable Father Claude as a saint. " I will not fail," she wrote, " to interest in behalf of your request the most holy Virgin and our blessed Father de la Colombière, who, I hope, will be a very great help to us." She attributed to his intercession the cure of a bad wound in her finger. She always observed the day of his death as a feast, and she composed a litany in his honour for her private use, in which she called him amongst many other titles, "Glorious martyr in will, who expired in the Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ." Such confidence and praise, on the part of such a saint as Blessed Margaret Mary Alacoque, must necessarily be a powerful help towards obtaining the Canonization of the Venerable Claude de la Colombière.

PREPARATORY INSTRUCTIONS

GIVEN BY THE VEN. FATHER DE LA COLOMBIÈRE TO THE JESUIT STUDENTS AT THE COLLEGE OF LYONS.

1. The Spiritual Exercises should only be made at certain times when the soul is drawn by God towards solitude through disgust with worldly things, or by some light or extraordinary movement which leads it to reform and sanctify itself, and seeks means to follow this attraction, or when, touched by the sight of its disorders, it conceives desires to be truly penitent.

2. At such times it is needful to enter into retreat in order to give ourselves leisure to examine what is taking place in us, what this grace requires from us, and how it may be performed.

3. It is a very good disposition with which to go into solitude, to have the design of changing our

life and sanctifying ourselves; but those who are not in this disposition should, I think, go through the Exercises in order to examine seriously into the state of their soul; to consider calmly whether they are in the way of salvation, whether, living as they do, they are not running some risk as to eternity; whether there is anything which ought to be changed, or whether they may live in tranquillity and follow the course upon which they have entered.

4. To apply oneself solely to this, and not to admit any other matter. It is right to give to God and to our soul the whole application which the most important affair that we have to deal with in our whole life demands.

5. Complete solitude.

6. Purity of heart and perfect exactness in keeping all the Rules and Additions; it is only for eight days. A slight fault may interpose a serious obstacle to the light from Heaven and repel God.

7. Great indifference about consolations. Not to expect any, and to be prepared for all kinds of weariness, aridity, and desolation. We deserve them, and if it shall please God to send them, it will be eight days' exercise of patience and penance.

8. If we are not resolved to become saints by means of these Exercises, we must at least be ready to receive the graces which it may please God to bestow upon us therein, and not to resist the good movements which we may receive from the Holy Spirit through His infinite mercy.—My God, I feel

no desire for this high perfection, perhaps I have even a great distaste for it; but if by an effect of Thy divine goodness Thou wilt change me, inspire me with more courage, and separate me, in spite of myself, from the world, I hope that I shall allow Thee to do so. Thou knowest what means must be used to conquer me; these means are in Thy hands, Thou art the Master. A perfect life alarms me; Thou canst rid me of this vain fear and render all that seems to me repulsive pleasing to me; Thou alone canst do this.

9. Great confidence in God. He sought me when I fled from Him, amidst the occupations of the world; He will not forsake me when I go to seek Him in retreat, or at least cease to fly from Him.

10. Great humility in making oneself known to the Director, even if one has nothing else to say but that one feels nothing, sees nothing, and is inclined to nothing good; to keep to the points which he gives and to the reading he prescribes, even when one would consider something else better. This simplicity has great merit, and brings down great blessings.

11. The day which precedes the Exercises, one must excite in oneself the desire for solitude: *Quis dabit mihi pennas?* "Who will give me wings?" The desire for perfection: *Beati qui esuriunt et sitiunt justitiam, quoniam ipsi saturabuntur:* "Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after justice, for they shall be filled."

SPIRITUAL RETREAT

OF THE

VENERABLE FATHER

CLAUDE DE LA COLOMBIÈRE

OF THE SOCIETY OF JESUS.

IN WHICH ARE NOTED DOWN THE GRACES AND PARTICULAR LIGHTS WHICH GOD IMPARTED TO HIM DURING HIS SPIRITUAL EXERCISES OF THIRTY DAYS.

FIRST WEEK.

I HAVE begun, it seems to me, with a will determined by God's grace to follow all the movements of the Holy Ghost, and without any attachment which would make me fear to belong unreservedly to God. Resolved to suffer for God all the aridity and inward desolation which may come to me, and which I have deserved only too well for the abuse which I have made of the lights and consolations which I formerly received. 1. I intend to go through these Exercises as if they were to be my last, and as if I was to die immediately thereafter.

2. To be exceedingly faithful and sincere therein, and on this point to conquer pride, which has a strong repugnance to reveal itself. 3. Not to rely at all upon myself, nor upon my carefulness; for this reason I resolved not to read any uncommon spiritual books, even if I should feel a strong passion for certain which treat of the spiritual life in an exalted manner, such as *Saint Teresa*, *The Interior Christian,* etc. I thought that God would cause me to find in the points which the spiritual Father will mark out for me, and in the books which he will give me, whatever He intends me to find and to feel in this retreat. I find this detachment very beneficial, and I thank God for having inspired me to make this sacrifice to Him, which was the greatest that I could make upon this occasion.

I experienced great confusion in that God having done me the honour to destine me to love Him, I have spent such a considerable part of my life, not only without loving Him, but in offending Him; I have admired with great sweetness of feeling the infinite patience and mercy of God, Who, seeing how I despised this glorious end, and that consequently I was useless to Him in the world, and hurtful to His interests, did not cease to bear with me, to wait for me to consider why I was there, and to cause me to remember it from time to time. I felt no difficulty in promising for the future to live only to serve Him, and to glorify Him.

All offices, all places, all the various states of the body, healthy, sick, impotent, living, dead, are, by God's grace, very indifferent to me. I seem even to envy those whom blindness, or some other habitual infirmity, separates from all intercourse with the world, obliging them to live as if they were already dead. I do not know if it is the prospect of the combats which I shall have to engage in during the rest of my life, which causes me to find a charm in that kind of state in which I should perhaps live in greater repose, and in a detachment which would cost me far less. When one wishes to belong to God at any cost, it is easy to understand how one desires the strangest means, when they appear the surest. In the ardent desire which God gives me never to love anything but Him and to keep my heart free from any attachment to creatures, a perpetual prison into which calumny should have thrown me would seem to me a matchless fortune, and I think that with the help of Heaven I should never be weary of it.

I have not found myself very eager to labour for the salvation of others. When I was considering the second of our Rules, it appeared to me that I had more zeal formerly. I do not know if I deceive myself; but I think that what makes me slack concerning this is only the fear that in employments into which zeal enters, I should seek myself; for it seems to me that in all of them nature flatters itself, especially when one succeeds, as one should hope to do, for the glory of God. It requires great grace and great strength to resist the charm which is found in changing hearts, and in the trust which those whom one has touched place in one.

Sin must be very dreadful, since it obliged God to damn creatures so perfect and so lovable as the Angels. How great therefore is Thy mercy, O my God, in bearing with me after so many sins, I who am only a little clay; in calling me back to Thee, in not wishing to lose me! How great Thy love must be, to counterbalance, to conquer the rightful aversion which Thou hast naturally for sin! This thought touches me to the heart, and fills me with tender love to God.

To the confusion caused me by the sight of my inordinations, succeeded the sweet thought, that here was much matter for the exercise of God's mercy, and a most firm hope that He would glorify Himself by forgiving me. *Reposita est haec spes in sinu meo.* This hope is so firmly established in my heart, that it seems that by God's grace I should sooner lose my life than be deprived of it. Then I threw myself into the arms of the Blessed Virgin, and she seemed to receive me with wonderful readiness and gentleness, which touched me the more, because I am conscious of having served her badly hitherto. But I have come here with a steadfast purpose to omit nothing this year which is calculated to produce great love for her, and to mark out for myself a plan of devotion towards her, which I shall try to keep to all my life. I feel much comforted by the thought that I shall have leisure to work at that, and that I shall succeed in it with the aid of the Blessed Virgin herself. Our Lady, having thus received me readily, seemed to present me to her Son, Who, out of consideration for her, looked at me, and opened to me His heart, as if I had been the most innocent of men.

Before making the meditation upon death, I had a conversation which caused me some uneasiness, owing, on the one hand, to the fear that I had gratified my vanity therein, and, on the other, by the apprehension that what I had said would cause me confusion. Having gone to the oratory filled with these movements, I combated them for nearly half-an-hour before I could regain the calmness of which they had deprived me; but at last, having all at once turned to the mercy of God for the fault which I had committed, and having accepted all the shame which it might bring upon me, and having even resolved to forestall it and seek it, in a moment there was so great a calm in my heart that I seemed again to have found God Whom I was seeking, which caused me a moment of the sweetest joy which I have ever felt in my life. Since that time I have remained strongly fortified against human respect and the judgment of men, and to conquer the repugnance which I experienced in disclosing my failings.

Then thinking of the state to which death reduces us in regard to all created things, I thought that this would trouble me little, not feeling an attachment to anything. I therefore asked myself this question: Since it would not grieve me to die now, and consequently to be deprived for ever of all that brings pleasure or honour in this life, why not resolve to live henceforth as if I were dead? I answered myself that I should have no difficulty in actually separating myself from all things, so as to spend the rest of my days in a tomb, or in a prison, with all possible uncomfort and infamy. But I foresaw that it will be very different, and will cost me many a combat, if I wish to live with complete detachment of affection in the midst of the world, where our employments keep us; however, I have resolved to do so with God's grace, which can alone work this miracle in me.

Lastly, thinking of what causes trouble at death, namely, past sins and future sufferings, a resolution presented itself at once to my mind, which I embraced with my whole heart, and with much consolation of soul. It was that in that last moment I will make of all the sins known or unknown which shall present themselves to my mind, a lump which I will throw at the feet of our Saviour, to be consumed by the fire of His mercy; the greater the number and the more heinous they shall appear to me to be, the more willingly I will offer them to Him to be consumed, because what I ask will be so much the more deserving of His mercy. I cannot then do anything more reasonable nor more glorious to God, and with the idea which I have conceived of His goodness I shall have no difficulty in resolving to do so, because I feel wholly inclined thereto. As to purgatory, for I should wrong the mercy of God by the least fear of hell, though I should have deserved it more than all the devils; as to purgatory, I do not fear it; I should wish not to have deserved it, for by so doing I have displeased God; but since the thing is done, I am delighted to go and satisfy His justice in the severest manner which can be imagined, even to the day of judgment. I am aware that the torments there are horrible, but I know that they honour God and cannot injure souls, that I shall be safe from ever opposing the will of God, that I shall not think unkindly of His rigour, that I shall even love His severity, and wait patiently until it be completely satisfied. So I have willingly given all my satisfactions to the souls in purgatory, and even ceded to others all the suffrages which shall be given me after my death, in order that God may be glorified in paradise by souls which have merited to be elevated there to higher glory than myself.

I have also been firmly convinced in this first week that men cannot satisfy the justice of God for the least fault. This caused me joy: first, because this relieves me from the constant anxiety as to whether I have done enough for my sins, since I should always be saying to myself: No, you have not done enough. As to the guilt, that is not in our power, it needs the Blood of God to efface that; as to the penalty, it needs either eternity or the sufferings of Jesus Christ; but this blood and these sufferings are in our hands. Secondly, we must not neglect to expiate the disorder of our life by penance; but without disquiet, for the worst that can happen when our will is good, and we are under obedience, is to remain a long time in purgatory, and it may be said in a good sense that that is not such a great evil. Moreover, I prefer to owe my forgiveness to God's mercy rather than to my diligence, because it is more to His glory and renders Him more lovable to me. I derive much benefit from having had my penances regulated for me. This preserves me from vanity, or indiscretion, or the uneasiness which the fear of self-love would have produced. I should most certainly have fallen into one of these snares, and perhaps into all three.

At the last judgment it will cause deep shame to vain persons, who have placed all their happiness in being honoured and esteemed by men, and who have sought every kind of distinction, to see themselves mingled with the vilest rabble, and thoroughly despised by those who esteemed them most in life. On the other hand, what a joy for humble souls, who for the love of God have led an obscure and ordinary life, to see themselves singled out and separated from the multitude, to be placed in the full daylight without any further fear of their virtue.

I find that of all times that of dryness and desolation is best suited for meriting. A soul which is seeking God only endures this state without difficulty and easily rises above what passes in the imagination and in the inferior part of the soul, in which are the greater number of consolations. It ceases not to love God, to humble itself, and to accept this state, even for ever. There is nothing so suspicious as these sweetnesses, and nothing more dangerous; we sometimes attach ourselves to them, and often after they are gone, we experience no fervour for good, quite the reverse.

But for me it is a solid consolation to think, in the midst of aridity, and even of temptations, that my heart is free, and that it is only by this heart that I can merit or demerit, that I neither please nor displease God by things which are not in my power, such as sensible likings, and troublesome thoughts which present themselves to the mind in spite of oneself. So, in such a state, I say to God: My God, let the world, or the devil even have that in me which I cannot take from him, that of which I am not master. As for my heart, which Thou hast been pleased to place in my hands, they shall never have any part of it. It is Thine, as Thou knowest and seest; Thou canst take it, it depends only on Thee, and Thou wilt do so when it shall please Thee. A man to whom God has given a real wish to serve Him should be troubled at nothing. *Pax hominibus bonae voluntatis.* This makes me hope, with God's grace, to make acts of true contrition, because I perceive the interested motives which may lead to sorrow for our sins; and with a hearty will and complete deliberation, I renounce all such motives. I am persuaded that God is infinitely kind, that He alone deserves to be considered, and that it is right that we should sacrifice to Him all our interests in order to think only of His glory. Now this is possible, or it is not; if it were impossible God would not advise it, nor order me to do it; if it be possible, with His grace I am doing it, for I do and wish sincerely and in good faith to do all that I can.

I think that I have never been so consoled as in the meditation on the Blessed Sacrament, which is the last of the first week. From the first moment that I was in the oratory, and considered this mystery, I felt quite penetrated with a sweet impulse of admiration and gratitude for the goodness which God has shown us in this mystery. I have indeed received therein such great graces, and have experienced so sensibly the effects of this bread of Angels, that I am unable to think of it without being touched with the deepest gratitude. I never conceived such great trust that I should persevere in good and in the desire which I have to belong entirely to God, notwithstanding the frightful difficulties which I imagine during the rest of my life. I will say Mass every day: there is my hope, my sole resource; Jesus Christ can do but very little, if He cannot sustain me from day to day. He will not fail to reproach me with my laxity directly I begin to give myself up to it, He will give me each day new counsels, new strength, He will teach me, comfort me, encourage me, and will grant me, or obtain for me by His Sacrifice, all the graces that I shall ask of Him.

If I do not see that He is present, I feel it. I am like the blind who threw themselves at His feet, and did not doubt that they touched Him, though they saw Him not. This meditation has greatly increased my faith in this mystery.

I have been deeply touched in considering both the thoughts which Jesus Christ may have of me whilst I hold Him in my hands, and those which He has for me, that is, the disposition of His heart, His wishes, His designs, etc. What sweetness, what graces a most pure and detached soul would receive in this Sacrament!

On the morning of the seventh day, I was attacked by thoughts of distrust concerning the plan of life which I am making for the future; I see great difficulties in it. It seems as if it would be easy to spend any other kind of life holily, and the more austere, solitary, and obscure it might be, and separated from all intercourse, the more pleasing it would appear to me to be. As to what usually terrifies nature, such as prisons, constant sickness, and even death, all this seems easy compared with this everlasting war with self, this vigilance against the attacks of the world and of self-love, this living death in the midst of the world. When I think of this, I foresee that life will seem to be of prodigious length, and that death will never come soon enough. I understood these words of St. Augustine: *Patienter vivit, et delectabiliter moritur:* "He lives with patience and dies with pleasure." I understood besides that the life which Jesus Christ chose is assuredly the most perfect, and that it is impossible to give a higher idea of holiness than that of a perfect Jesuit. This is producing a good result, which is to convince me thoroughly that if I have hitherto practised some detachment, though very imperfect, I was far from doing so of myself, and for the future God must take the work in hand if He wishes to make anything good of me; for I feel deeply how incapable I am of doing anything without His grace.

I observe that it requires many steps to arrive at holiness, and that each step we make we imagine to be a great advance, whilst after we have made it we find that it is nothing, and that we have yet to begin. A man who is about to leave the world regards this action as one after which there will remain nothing more to do; but when he has entered upon religious life with all his passions, he finds that he was mistaken in his reckoning, that he has simply made a change of objects, and that he is worldly, though out of the world. There is then a further step to be made, which is to detach himself from those objects from which his state does not entirely detach him, to withdraw even his heart from the world, and to have no love for anything created. This is very different from leaving the world and becoming a religious. When that is done, there is still another step to make, namely, to become detached from oneself, to seek God alone even in God, not merely to seek no temporal interest in holiness which would be gross imperfection, but not to seek even our spiritual interests therein, to seek simply the interest of God. My God, to attain to this Thou must work powerfully in me; for how could a creature of itself reach this degree of purity? *Quis potest facere mundum de immundo conceptum semine? Nonne tu qui solus es?*

A thought which consoled me greatly, and which is able with God's grace to allay part of my uneasiness, is, that in order to know if one is humanly attached to things imposed by obedience, if one displeases God by taking, for instance, the necessities of life, by the enjoyment of a high reputation, by the glory resulting from our labours, or by the pleasure which there is in maintaining it holily, etc.: to know, I say, whether self-love has crept into these things, we must not judge by feeling, because in the ordinary course it is as impossible not to feel the pleasure which such things bring with them as it is not to feel fire when applied to what is sensitive. Yet we must examine: 1. Whether we have sought in any way the pleasure which we experience. 2. Whether the loss of it would grieve us. 3. Whether if it were equally to God's glory, and we were free to choose, we should rather choose what is disagreeable and obscure. When one is in this disposition one should labour with great freedom and courage for God, and despise all the doubts and scruples which might hinder or trouble us.

SECOND WEEK.

In the first meditation I was troubled by recollections of a weakness to which I had given way on the preceding day. But, having discovered the reason why God had permitted the faults which I had committed, namely, to cure me of the vain esteem which I was beginning to conceive of myself, the sight produced sensible joy and tranquillity. I perceived with pleasure, which was certainly not natural, that I was not such as I imagined, and I do not remember having ever discovered any truth with such satisfaction as that with which I recognized my worthlessness upon this occasion.

The Incarnation : here I find only annihilation and humility. The angel bows before a maiden; Mary takes the position of a servant; the Word becomes a captive; and Jesus Christ, conceived in the womb of His Mother, annihilates Himself before God in the most real and profound way that can possibly be imagined. My God, what a beautiful spectacle for Thee to behold persons so excellent humble themselves before Thee in so perfect a manner, at the time when Thou art honouring them with Thy choicest favours! I had much pleasure in considering the inward feelings of these holy persons, but especially the deep abasement by which Jesus Christ began to glorify His Father, and to repair the wrong done to His Majesty by the pride of mankind. For my part I am unable to humble myself at this sight, for where can I place myself, since I find Jesus Christ even in nothingness? This may well bring down my pride: the Son of God annihilated before His Father! I never understood till now that saying of St. Bernard: What insolence for a worm to swell with pride, when the only-begotten Son of the Father humbles and annihilates Himself.

The Circumcision: I understood that the life of an Apostle requires great mortification: 1. Without it, God does not communicate Himself. 2. It is not possible to edify others. A man who refrains from pleasures, and who labours incessantly to repress his passions, speaks with much more authority and makes a much deeper impression. As I am naturally fond of pleasure, I have resolved to watch this evil inclination.

The Flight into Egypt: according to human prudence this was hard and contrary to all reason. What can they do amongst a strange and idolatrous people? But it is God's will, so it must be expedient: to reason upon obedience, however extravagant it may appear, is to distrust God's prudence, and to think that in spite of His wisdom He gives orders which can bring neither glory to Him nor profit to ourselves. As to commands in which human reason sees nothing, a man of faith ought to rejoice at the thought that it is God alone Who is acting and Who is preparing all the more benefits for us as He will have to send them to us in hidden ways which we cannot foresee. For my part, I have not, thank God, any difficulty in this, for I have learnt it by experience.

The Presentation: what an offering is here made on the part of Jesus, and of Mary! What honour is rendered to God upon this occasion! I offer the same offering at Mass: if I could but do so with the same feelings, and the same desire to please God! I take pleasure in considering, in the canticle of Simeon, the clear prophecy of the conversion of the Gentiles: *Salutare tuum, quod parasti ante faciem omnium populorum, lumen ad revelationem gentium:* "Thy salvation, that Thou hast prepared before the face of all people, a light to lighten the Gentiles." This holy man was very enlightened, and must have been exceedingly holy to have merited such signal favours. There are few true saints; yet there are some, and there have been in all ages.

I was omitting the Nativity, in which I remember that I besought God with great ardour, for about half an hour, to give me that perfect detachment of which Jesus sets us an example; I asked this through the intercession of Saint Joseph, of the Blessed Virgin, and through Jesus Christ Himself. Amongst my devotions to the Blessed Virgin, I have determined never to ask anything of God in any prayer without employing the intercession of Mary.

Quid est quod me quaerebatis, etc.: "Why did you seek Me?" In this meditation I was deeply touched by the sorrow which the Blessed Virgin felt during the three days that she was deprived of the presence of her Son, but still more by her tranquillity of heart, which was not disturbed, and which showed itself in seeking Jesus, and in acts of the most submissive and most heroic resignation. *In his quae Patris mei sunt oportet me esse:* "I must be engaged in My Father's work." I found important lessons for myself in these words. If the whole world were to rise against me, ridicule me, complain of me, and blame me, still I must do whatever God commands me, whatever He inspires me with for His greater glory. I have promised this, and I hope with God's grace to do so. This requires great watchfulness, without which one is easily surprised by human respect, especially when one is weak as I am.

Et erat subditus illis, crescebat aetate et sapientia: "He was subject to them; He increased in age and wisdom." I have reflected that instead of growing in virtue as we advance in age, we often decrease, especially in simplicity and fervour with regard to outward humiliations and dependence as to our spiritual guidance. I was moved at recognizing that in proportion as the number of God's benefits increases our love and gratitude grow cold. Why should we part with the virtues of novices? I admit that they do not suffice, and that many others must be added to them; but there is a wide difference between acquiring new virtues and getting rid of old ones: the early ones should be strengthened, not renounced.

Secondly, this love of solitude seemed to me very conformable to the mind of God. The spirit of the world makes us hasten and seek to shine, persuading us that we can never do this soon enough. The spirit of God has very different movements: thirty years of obscurity, unknown, notwithstanding all the specious pretexts which the glory of God might have afforded to a less enlightened zeal. I will remain in solitude as long as obedience will allow. No visit of mere civility, especially to women, no particular intimacy with any layman, at least I will seek for none, and will do nothing to maintain it, unless it be evident that God's glory requires me to act otherwise. This is one of my resolutions.

Thirdly, this inner life of Jesus Christ, which brings into such strong relief the lowliness of His actions, seems to reveal to me the real path to holiness. In the sort of life which I have embraced, this is the only way to distinguish oneself with God, because the whole exterior life is common. I am also extremely disposed towards it, to apply myself henceforth to do the smallest things with the highest intentions, to practise frequently, in my innermost heart, acts of the most perfect virtues of annihilation before God, of desire to promote His glory, of trust, of love, of resignation, and of complete sacrifice. This may be done everywhere, even when unemployed.

Though all that we can do to promote God's glory is very little, and even this exterior glory is a very small thing with Him, yet it is not so small but that the Eternal Word became incarnate for it. How wonderful it is that, though able Himself to convert the whole world, He preferred to do so through His disciples; He employed His life in training them; it seems as if, out of all that was necessary for the conversion of the world, He only took for Himself what was thorny, such as death, and left the brilliant things to men. How great was His love for those few men, to wish to use them to sanctify others, though He could easily have done this without them!

The Baptism: I understood that a man who is called to convert others has need of great virtues, above all of deep humility, and wonderful obedience. There are occasions on which we can imitate this conduct and we ought not to let them slip. To dispose things in such a way that one appears to follow advice when one gives it, and to seem to be only the instrument when one is really the workman, this facilitates the execution of things and tends to humility. I have no difficulty in attributing everything to God: how could I of myself accomplish anything for the sanctification of others, when I see how incapable I am of curing myself of the slightest imperfections, though I am aware of them, and though I have many weapons in my hands to conquer them?

I have resolved to be obedient all my life, like a child, above all in things which in any way concern the advancement of God's service; because without this, there is danger of self-seeking. What a delusion it is to think of serving God and glorifying Him, more or differently from what He pleases! If you were the chief person in the world, what difficulty would there be in obeying a man in everything? This is being a man of God; you may well obey a bell.

Moreover, to honour those who are labouring for the salvation of souls, to further their ministry as much as possible, to maintain perfect union with them, and to rejoice at their success. An opposite line of conduct is the most absurd, faulty, vain, and far from the spirit of God, that a man who is working for the salvation of souls could pursue.

In the Desert: thirty years of preparation would have seemed to suffice; but no, Jesus Christ has no sooner His mission from His Father than the Holy Spirit leads Him into the desert to practise there the mortification and the other virtues necessary for the office of an Apostle. I propose to avoid all daintiness in eating, clothes, etc., never to ask for special food when preaching, and never to complain of anything. *Non in solo pane vivat homo:* "Not in bread alone doth man live." Secondly, never to have anything special for clothes, even for the country, and to perform all my journeys, as far as possible, on foot. It is easy to do this without great inconvenience, and, besides other good effects, it humbles the spirit.

I have also resolved to make my spiritual exercises and all my retreats with inviolable fidelity, and with the greatest fervour that I can; to meditate much upon the life of Jesus Christ, which is the pattern for ours.

I understood the saying of Berchmans: *Mortificatio maxima vita communis:* "Common life is a very great mortification," for it mortifies body and mind. All else is often only the result of vanity, which seeks distinction. In any case, before doing what is extraordinary, I should wish to do all that is ordinary, and to do it under all the circumstances required by the Rules: this includes much, and leads to admirable holiness. In reading our Rules, I conceived a strong desire to keep them all by the grace of God. This requires, in my opinion, great courage, great simplicity, great recollection, great strength and great constancy, and above all, great grace from God.

Jesus Christ chose for His first Apostles men who were poor, dull of comprehension, and, humanly speaking, little suited to His purpose. Not that a person must be of low birth and illiterate in order to labour for the salvation of souls, but to impress upon all who are called to do so how little necessary their talents, natural or acquired, are, and that these are not the cause of the success they may have in their work. He also chose fishermen, etc., to show us that it is not work for the fastidious; but that many fatigues must be endured, and we must be prepared for the roughest labours. Thank God, I feel ready for this, and no kind of work alarms me; I should willingly die labouring therein; but I feel so unworthy of this favour that I know not whether God will use me for anything whatever.

Beati pauperes spiritu, mites, mundo, corde: " Blessed are the poor in spirit, the meek, the clean of heart." These three Beatitudes seem to have some connection and cannot be the one without the other. I quite understood that those are truly happy who are detached from all things, and who have plucked from their heart even its vicious inclinations; but I am certainly far from this state. I feel, at the close of this second week, that the tendency to vainglory is almost as strong in my heart as ever, although it does not produce the same results, and with the help of grace I repress its movements. I seem never to have known myself so thoroughly; but I recognize my wretchedness so deeply that I am ashamed of myself, and this sight causes me such fits of sadness from time to time, that I should fall into despair unless God sustained me. In this state nothing consoles me so much as the reflection that this very sadness is a consequence of great vanity, that this knowledge and realization of my wretchedness is a great grace from God, and that, provided I hope in Him, and am faithful to Him in combating nature, He will not allow me to perish. I submit myself to His will in all things, and am ready, if He wills, to spend my life in this troublesome struggle, provided He prevents me by His grace from yielding. Nevertheless, I think that one stifles this appetite for vainglory by dint of repressing its movements. A person succeeds in the end in thoroughly stifling remorse of conscience, though there are grace, nature, and education to be combated.

In the meditation upon the Three Degrees of Humility, besides feeling with much sweetness, confusion, and fear that God calls me to the third, which consists in cutting off all evil inclinations, and loving all that the world hates; besides seeing that I should be the most miserable of men if I were to content myself with anything less, many reasons convince me that I must aim at it with all my might. First, God has loved me too well for me to spare myself henceforth with regard to Him; the mere thought of doing so horrifies me. What, not belong wholly to God after His mercy to me, or reserve something for myself after all that I have received from Him? Never will my heart consent to act thus. Secondly, when I see of how little account I am, and what it is that I can do for God's glory by employing myself entirely in His service, I am ashamed at the mere thought of depriving Him of anything. Thirdly, there would be no safety for me in any medium; I know myself, and I should soon fall into a bad extreme. Fourthly, only those who have given themselves to God unreservedly can expect to die calmly. Fifthly, they alone lead a peaceful and tranquil life. Sixthly, in order to perform much for God one must be completely His, however little you keep back, you will be unfit to do great things for others. Seventhly, in this state one maintains a lively faith and firm hope, one asks God confidently, and one obtains infallibly.

In the meditation upon the Three States or Three Classes, I have resolved, and seemingly in good faith, thanks be to God, to be one of those who desire to be healed at any cost, and as I have recognized that my ruling passion is the desire for vainglory, I have firmly resolved to omit no humiliation of all those that I can procure without offending against the rule, and not to avoid those that present themselves. I have remarked that this continual care to humble and mortify self in everything sometimes makes nature sad, which renders it cowardly and little inclined to serve God. This is a temptation which can be conquered, I think, by supposing that God exacts this from us only from friendship. Let us apply ourselves to this exercise as a good friend endeavours on all occasions to please his friend, or a good son to serve and give pleasure to his good father, without there being any need for constraint, retaining a certain liberty of spirit amidst the smallest and most assiduous attentions, which liberty is one of the most sensible signs of true love. We do with pleasure what we believe will be agreeable to the person we really love.

In the repetition of the two previous meditations I was at first deeply impressed by the thought of the pride contained in a deliberate sin, and of the blindness of those who deliberate as to whether they should content themselves with avoiding mortal sin, etc., as if a greater good ought not to be unhesitatingly preferred to a smaller one; this feeling was crushed by a thought of vain complacency which occurred to me, and which I had to resist. I cannot describe how much this humbled me. I spent the remainder of the meditation in the thought of my nothingness, and of my unworthiness to receive any graces or consolations. I accepted with entire submission the privation of these blessings for my whole life, and to be until death the sport and laughing-stock of the devils, and to suffer every kind of temptation. I seemed to acknowledge, with the Canaanitish woman, that to me belonged no part of the children's bread. I asked God only for what is strictly necessary to sustain me, so that I may not offend Him. Yet I do not despair of attaining to the degree of holiness which my vocation requires; but I see that it will take me a long time to do so. Well, thank God, I have resolved upon a long perseverance; holiness is so great and precious a thing that it cannot be bought too dearly.

It was then that, feeling strongly urged to fulfil the plan of life which I had been contemplating for three or four years, and with the consent of my director, I gave myself to Thee in earnest, O my God! How great are Thy mercies towards me, God of Majesty! Who am I that Thou shouldst accept the sacrifice of my heart? It shall be Thine alone, and creatures shall no longer have any part in it, for indeed they are not worth it. Be then, kind Jesus, my Father, my Friend, my Master, my All, since Thou art satisfied to have my heart: would it not indeed be unreasonable if it were not satisfied with Thine? I wish henceforth to live for Thee only, and to live long, if it be Thy good pleasure, in order to suffer more. I do not ask for death, which would shorten my sufferings. It is not Thy will that I should die at the same age as Thyself. Thy will be done; but at least it seems only just that I should begin to live to Thee and for Thee at the age that Thou didst die for all men, and for me in particular, who have so often rendered myself unworthy of this great favour. Receive, then, sweet Saviour of mankind, this sacrifice which the most ungrateful of men makes to Thee, to repair the injury which he has unceasingly done Thee hitherto by offending Thee.

PLAN OF A VOW.

Juravi et statui custodiri judicia justitiae tuae: "I have sworn and I have resolved to keep the judgments of Thy justice."

I feel myself drawn to make a vow to God to observe our Constitutions, our Common Rules, our

Rules of Modesty, and the Rules for Priests, in the following manner: —

Summary of the Constitutions.

1. To labour all my life for my own perfection by the observance of the Rules, and for the sanctification of others, by profiting by all the opportunities which obedience or Providence shall afford me of using my zeal without clashing with the Rules of discretion and of Christian prudence. (Rule 2.)

2. To go indifferently, without exception or comment, wherever obedience shall send me. (Rule 3.)

3. To confer with the superior as to exterior penances, and not to omit unnecessarily such as he thinks good for me to do; to make a general confession each year, the examen of conscience twice a day, to have a fixed confessor, and to disclose to him my whole conscience. (Rules 4, 5, 6, 7.)

4. To love my relations only in Jesus Christ. I seem by God's grace to do this already, so this point will not be difficult. (Rule 8.)

5. To think it right that I should be reproved, and that my superiors should be informed of my defects, and to inform them of those committed by my brethren in cases wherein I consider myself obliged thereto by the Rule. (Rules 9 and 10.)

6. To wish to be outraged and loaded with calumny and insults; and to pass for a fool,

though without giving occasion for it, and if God be not offended thereby. It seems to me that in this I have only to ask God to maintain in me the feelings which He has already given me in His infinite mercy. (Rule 11.)

7. Concerning the greatest self-denial and continual mortification, I think with God's grace I can vow: 1. Never to have any efficacious will with regard to life, health, prosperity, adversity, offices, or places, except in so far as this will shall be conformed to His. 2. To wish, as far as I can, for whatever is most contrary to my natural inclinations, if that be not opposed to His greater glory. I seem through His infinite goodness to be almost in this state. 3. Never to seek for what flatters the senses, such as sights, concerts, odours, or things that gratify the taste, nor for what encourages vanity; to seek none of these, neither in my conversation, nor in any actions; as to furniture and clothes, to be satisfied with what is given to me, unless obedience, or the Rule relating to the care of health, should oblige me to behave differently. 4. To shun no mortification which shall present itself, unless I judge according to God, that I ought to act otherwise for some real reason. 5. Never to enjoy any pleasure which necessity brings me, such as eating, drinking, sleeping, nor those which, in the Society, cannot be avoided without affectation or singularity, such as recreation, particular dishes, etc., never to take them for the pleasure which nature finds therein, but to renounce them in my heart, and actually to mortify myself in them

as far as God shall inspire me to do, as far as I can do so without attracting too much attention. (Rule 12.)

8. The four following Rules are included in the others; as to the seventeenth, which relates to purity of intention, I can vow, I think: 1. Never, with God's help, to do anything except for His glory, at least with reflection. 2. Never to do anything or omit anything out of human respect. This last point pleases me much, and I think it will establish me in great inward peace. (Rule 17.)

9. This vow includes, if I mistake not, the observance of the nineteenth. (Rule 19.)

10. As to the twenty-first, I can vow: 1. Always to make my meditation, and to observe, both in the preparation and during the course of it, the additions of St. Ignatius, unless reason or charity, or some equally good reason, should lead me to dispense with any of these points. 2. As to Mass and the office, to keep the Rule for Priests. (Rule 21.)

11. As to poverty, I have already made a vow to keep all the Rules concerning it which have been given us by St. Ignatius.

12. As to chastity, never to look at any object calculated to suggest thoughts contrary to this virtue, at least deliberately or without strict necessity; never to read or listen to anything unchaste, unless charity or the exigencies of my office compel me to do so; to observe the Rules for Priests as to confession and visiting women.

13. Always to eat with temperance, modesty, and propriety; to say the blessing and thanksgiv-

ing at table with respect and devotion.

14. As to obedience, I have already vowed to practise it according to our Rules.

15. To observe what relates to letters sent or received according as the superiors shall wish them to be observed.

16. To render an account of conscience according to the formula which we have in our Constitutions.

17. To keep nothing hidden from my confessor, at least of what he ought to know in order to guide me.

18. In what relates to union and brotherly charity, things purely secular, and the care of health, I have no difficulty, nor in the manner of acting to be observed in illness.

Common Rules.

To make the examen of conscience and the particular examen twice a day, and to mark the result, according to the teaching of St. Ignatius; spiritual reading when I am able; not to absent myself from the sermon without permission when I am in the house; only to make my confession to my usual confessor; to keep the Friday abstinence according to the custom of the Society; not to preach without the approval of the superiors. The three following Rules concern poverty; the rest seem to me to present no difficulty. One can vow, I think, never to dispense oneself from them without leave.

When arriving in a house one should remember to ask the following permissions from the superiors: 1, to have books; 2, to see the sick frequently, unless it is the custom to ask leave each time that one visits them; 3, to enter the room of certain persons for a moment on certain occasions, such as to ask advice, or return a book, etc.; 4, to speak to externs in the house, and to send for them to come there if necessary; 5, to execute the commissions of those outside, in the house, and of those in the house outside, when asked, and one deems that there is nothing unusual in it; 6, to write letters, on the understanding that they are shown to the proper person, unless it is the custom to ask permission each time that one wishes to write.

Rules of Modesty, and for Priests.

The Rules of Modesty are drawn up in such a way that they can cause no difficulty, any more than the Rules for Priests. The Rule which requires the instruction of children does not, in my opinion, impose a greater obligation than that contained in the vow made by the professed.

One can bind oneself by vow to keep the Rules for special offices, when one is selected for them.

Motives for this Vow.

1. To impose upon oneself the indispensable necessity of fulfilling as far as possible the duties

of my state, and of being faithful to God, even in the smallest things.

2. To break, at one blow, all the chains of self-love, and to deprive it for ever of the hope of some future gratification, a hope which seems to me always to exist in the heart, in whatever state of mortification one may be.

3. To acquire at once the merit of a long life, in the uncertainty we have of living a single day; to place oneself in a position not to fear that death may come and snatch from us the means of glorifying God more and more; for the will to do so everlastingly cannot fail to be taken for the act, since one binds oneself so strictly to the performance.

4. To make reparation for past irregularities, by pledging oneself to be regular as long as it shall please God to prolong our life. This motive touches me deeply, and urges me more powerfully than all the rest.

5. To acknowledge to some extent the infinite mercies which God has exercised towards me, in binding myself indispensably to execute His slightest orders.

6. Out of respect for the divine will, which deserves to be performed under pain of everlasting damnation, though God in His infinite goodness does not always bind us to it by such severe penalties.

7. To do, on my side, whatever depends upon me that I may belong unreservedly to God; to detach my heart from all creatures, and to love

God with all my might, at least with an effective love.

Some Considerations which encourage me to make this Vow.

1. I find no more difficulty in observing what this vow includes, than a man who is naturally inclined to pleasure must have in preserving chastity, which involves him in many struggles and much watchfulness.

2. God, who inspired our Rules to Saint Ignatius, intended them to be kept. It is therefore not impossible to do so, there is not even a moral impossibility. But the vow, far from rendering the observance more difficult, facilitates it, not only by removing temptations through fear of committing a grievous sin, but also because it binds God to afford greater help in need.

3. Berchmans spent five years in the Society without his conscience reproaching him with the violation of any Rule: why cannot I, by God's grace, do the same, at an age when one ought to have greater strength, and at which one is less exposed to human respect, which is the most dangerous enemy to be combated?

4. I am not afraid that this vow will deprive me of peace of soul, and become for me a rock of scandal: *Pax multa diligentibus legem tuam, et non est illis scandalum:* "Much peace for those who love Thy law, and for them there is no scandal." This is an article of faith; and, consequently, the

more one loves this law, the greater tranquillity one finds: *Ambulabo in latitudine, quia mandata tua exquisivi:* " I will walk in wide space because I have kept Thy commandments." Exactness in fulfilling the slightest observances sets the mind at liberty instead of producing constraint.

5. I seem to have been living for some time almost in the way that I shall be bound to do after this vow. It is rather out of the wish to persevere in it than from a desire to do something new and extraordinary that I have entertained this idea.

6. The mere thought of making this vow detaches me from worldly things, almost as if I felt the approach of death .

7. I do not lean upon my resolution, nor upon my own strength, but upon the goodness of God, which is infinite, and upon His grace, which He never fails to bestow abundantly and all the more when one strives to serve Him unreservedly: *Non delinquent omnes qui sperant in eo:* " They will not fail who hope in Him."

8. I think that this step will only bind me to rather more watchfulness, for I think that I would not now break any of these Rules deliberately.

9. To anticipate scruples, I can pledge myself to nothing that is doubtful.

10. I can bind myself upon this condition, that if, when some time has elapsed, I find that this vow causes me disquiet, the engagement shall cease; if not, it shall last for life.

11. When one has permission, one does not break a Rule, at least when it is a question of an

exterior Rule; one must be in a sad state if one prefers to break a Rule and displease God rather than say a word to the superior, even if it be not under pain of mortal sin.

12. I do not consider myself bound to anything upon all occasions when another might dispense himself from the Rule without acting contrary to perfection.

13. The thought of this engagement does not alarm me, it gives me joy; it seems as if, instead of being a slave, I am about to enter into the realm of liberty and peace. Self-love will cease to cavil when there will be so much danger in obeying its movements. I seem to have attained to happiness, and that I have at last found the treasure which must be so dearly bought.

14. This is not transitory fervour, for I have long been contemplating this step; but I had reserved the complete investigation of it for this occasion; the nearer the time comes for putting it in practice the easier it seems, and the greater strength and determination I feel.

15. Notwithstanding all this I shall wait for your decision before proceeding further. Therefore I beg you to examine this paper, and to reflect especially upon these last considerations, in which you will perhaps find indications of the spirit of God; if not, you need only say that you do not think it well for me to carry out this project, and I shall have the same respect for your opinion which I owe to the word of God.

In the meditation upon the Mission of the Apostles, I begin, I think, to know my vocation and the spirit of the Society, and by God's grace I also begin to see that this spirit is growing within me, whether on account of the special affection and high esteem which I feel for all the Rules, or because my zeal is becoming greater and more pure.

In the words which contain the mission of the Apostles: *Docete omnes,* "Go and teach all," I understood that we are sent to all kinds of persons, and that wherever a Jesuit is found, in whatever company he may be, he is there as sent by God to treat of the business of salvation with those he meets with, and that if he does not speak of this, nor profit by every opportunity to advance it, he betrays his ministry, and renders himself unworthy of the name he bears. I have therefore resolved to remember this under all circumstances, and to study to turn the conversation upon things which may edify those whom I meet, so that no one may part from me without having greater knowledge of God than when he came, and greater wish, if possible, for his salvation.

In meditating upon Zeal, the disinterestedness and indifference which one should have occupied me the whole time. I thank God that I found in me no repugnance to employ myself in the instruction of children and of the poor; on the contrary, I think I should joyfully undertake these works; they do not encourage vanity, and are generally more fruitful. After all, the soul of a poor man is as dear to Jesus Christ as that of a king, and it matters little with whom paradise is filled. This is one of the principal signs which Jesus Christ gives of His mission: *Pauperes evangelizantur*, "To the poor the Gospel is preached;" and by this mark it may be known that the spirit of God founded the Society; for catechising, together with the care of the poor, is one of its principal duties. The Constitutions recommend nothing more strongly to us than this. I think that one has reason to hope that one is sent by God, and that it is He that one seeks, when one has this indifference; therefore I have resolved, whether in hearing confessions, or in preaching, to love to serve the poor, and if it be in my choice, to prefer them to the rich; the latter will have no lack of people to serve them.

In the meditation upon Apostolical Poverty, I have resolved that this virtue shall be an honour and pleasure to me all my life, that I may have the consolation of always being able to say: "I have nothing," whereas the world and self-love find so much satisfaction in having and reckoning up what they possess; especially no books, this will oblige me to read well and diligently those that I consider most necessary; as to the rest, it will cost me little to do without them.

In meditating on Mortification I understood that an apostle is not called to an easy life or repose: he must toil and moil, and fear neither heat nor cold, fasting nor watching; his life and his strength must be devoted to this work. The worst that can happen to him is to die in serving God and his neighbour; and I do not see that this need terrify any one. Health and life are indifferent to me; but sickness or death, when they come upon me through my labour for the salvation of souls, will be very agreeable and precious to me.

The same day, after dinner, having read in the life of Berchmans the death of that holy young man, I was deeply touched by the words he then said, that he had great consolation in never having broken any Rule. Reflecting what I could say on this subject if I had to render an account to God, I at once felt such great sorrow at having kept my Rules so badly that I wept abundantly. I then made my prayer, in which I formed great resolutions to be a better Jesuit than I had been hitherto. I invoked this blessed youth with great confidence, and I prayed to him through the Blessed Virgin, whom he loved so well, and by the Society to which he was so faithful, to obtain for me grace to live until death as he had done during five years. For the remainder of the day I was penetrated with sorrow, having continually before my eyes my Rules, so frequently despised and broken; I wept over it three or four times, and I think by God's grace it will not be easy to lead me to break them in future. Still I am inconsolable about the past; I never comprehended the evil which I did in this. I thought that if in the hour of death Berchmans had been asked to break a Rule, no consideration whatever would have induced him to commit this fault after having passed his life without failing in anything. Now we have as much reason to resist all temptations of this kind. In breaking silence today I should not offend God less, I should despise an order inspired by the Holy Ghost to our Holy Founder, and it will be no thanks to me if regularity is not destroyed; this Rule is not such a slight thing but that the welfare of the whole body depends upon it.

As to Contempt of the World, I think that the practice of the presence of God is very efficacious. It is a thought of St. Basil that a man who has a king and a lackey for witnesses of what he does thinks not of the lackey, but only of gaining the approbation of the prince. It is a strange and unhappy servitude to seek to please men. When shall I be able to say: *Mihi mundus crucifixus est et ego mundo:* "The world is crucified to me, and I to the world"? I have entreated Jesus Christ and the Blessed Virgin to grant me this disposition.

In the meditation upon Humility, I do indeed understand that it should be great in an apostolical man, and I think that the fear of not having enough will be a dread to me for life. Yet, I think that in this one need only be watchful and avoid carelessness. It is not easy for a person who reflects upon what he is, and what he has been, and what he can accomplish by himself, to attribute anything to himself; in order to crush self-love, he has only to remember that the first sign of virtue is not to esteem oneself. Secondly, I need only look at Jesus Christ annihilated in all reality, and Who acknowledges before God that He is nothing, and that in all He does the glory is due solely to His

Father. When people praise me, they are mistaken, and it is an injustice done to God. It is like praising an actor for the verses, written by another, which he recites. Besides, others do not esteem us so highly as we imagine; they are acquainted with our faults, even those of which we ourselves are not aware; or perhaps they do not think of us at all. Still, I wish to do great things, or, to speak more correctly, that God should perform great things through me. It is a subject for praise and admiration that God makes such good use of such bad instruments; but I am none the better for that, and it may happen that God will condemn me after having saved many through me, just as a painter throws a piece of charcoal into the fire, after having used it to trace an admirable design and most excellent figures. The behaviour of the Blessed Virgin is admirable; she frankly admits that God has done great things in her, and that it will win for her the praises of all ages, but, instead of being puffed up thereat, *Magnificat anima mea Dominum:* "My soul doth magnify the Lord."

At the repetition of this meditation, after having acknowledged before God that I am nothing, and of myself have never done anything, I understood how just it is that God alone should be glorified, and it seemed to me that a man who is praised for some virtue or good deed ought to be as much ashamed as an honourable man would be at seeing himself taken for another, and praised for what he had not done. If we are vain enough to be proud of these qualities, whether natural or supernatural, which are not really ours, how great will be our shame when at the judgment day God will bring forward this vain man, and, displaying before the whole world what he had received and what he had of himself, will reproach him with his vanity, saying: *Quid habes quod non accepisti? si autem accepisti quid gloriaris?* "What hast thou that thou hast not received? And if thou hast received it, why dost thou boast?" I seem to see a rogue, who, having passed for some time for an honest man by reason of a stolen cloak, has been discovered when in good company, and put to grievous confusion. But it will be much worse, my God, when Thou shalt show that I not only possessed nothing about which to glory, but I had not even that of which I had gloried, when Thou shalt lay bare my hypocrisy, the abuse that I have made of Thy graces, my inward wretchedness, etc. God then showed me to myself so deformed, so wretched, so devoid of all merit and all virtue, that I had never before been so disagreeable in my own eyes. I seemed to hear Him in my innermost heart going through all the virtues, and showing me clearly that I possessed none of them. I entreated Him that I might always retain this light. I admit that this self-knowledge which is daily increasing greatly weakens, or at least moderates, a certain firm trust which I have long had in God's mercy. I dare no longer raise my eyes to heaven, and I feel so unworthy of God's graces that I scarcely know whether I have not barred all entrance to them. This feeling arises principally from the comparison which I make of my life, and sins, and pride, with the innocence and humility of our saints.

After the preceding meditation I found that upon Distrust of Self quite easy. When one knows what we are, and what it is to save a soul, one is quickly convinced that one counts for nothing in it. What folly to think that we can accomplish by a few words said in passing, what costs Jesus Christ so dearly! You speak, and a soul is converted; it is like the puppet-show, the servant tells the puppet to dance, and the master moves it by a spring. The order has no part in it. *Exi a me, quia homo peccator sum, Domine:* "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." This is the deep feeling in a soul, in which, or by which, God works something extraordinary.

In the meditation upon Prayer, as I feel, through God's mercy, a considerable attraction towards prayer, I earnestly besought God, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin, to grant me grace to love this exercise more and more until death. It is the sole means of purifying us, uniting us with God, and causing God to unite Himself with us to perform something for His glory. We must pray in order to obtain apostolical virtues, we must pray in order that they may be useful to others, and we must pray so that we may not lose them in serving our neighbour. This counsel, or command: "Pray without ceasing," seems to me very sweet, and by no means impossible. It includes the practice of the presence of God. I will, with God's help, endeavour to follow it. We always need God, therefore we must pray to Him always, and the more we pray the better we please Him, and the more we obtain. I do not ask for that sweetness which God bestows as He thinks good, in prayer; I am not worthy of it, and I have not strength to bear it. Extraordinary graces are not good for me. It would be building upon sand to give them to me, or like pouring precious liquor into a vessel with holes, which can retain nothing. I ask of God prayer which is solid, simple, which glorifies Him, and does not make me proud. Aridity and desolation, accompanied by God's grace, are, I think, very useful to me: I then make acts of the most excellent virtues with pleasure; I struggle against an evil disposition, and I try to be faithful to God, etc.

As to Conformity with the will of God. From the commencement of the meditation I felt disposed to make acts of it. I did so without difficulty, because, by God's grace, I really feel none concerning any state, and I think that by that same grace I should accept with submission the most vexatious events which Providence should allow to happen to me, or at least I should speedily bring myself to do so, if God should not forsake me. I am, above all, resigned to sanctify myself in the way which pleases God, by withdrawal of all sensible sweetness, if He so wills, by interior sufferings, and by continual combats with my passions. This is what is roughest to me in life, yet I submit most heartily, and the more willingly because

I know that this is the safest road, the least liable to delusions, the shortest to acquire perfect purity of heart, great love to God, and great merits.

THIRD WEEK.

In the first meditation for the third week, namely that on the preparation for the Passion, in considering the ardent desire of Jesus Christ to suffer, my mind turned first to the desire which the saints had to die, which desire made death seem to them unspeakably sweet. This is the result, I think, of inviolable fidelity in corresponding to all God's graces, and in doing for Him all the good that they were able to perform during many years. This thought kindled in me a strong wish not to lose time, and to do as soon as possible whatever good I am able to do, so as to be in a condition to desire death, and to welcome it joyfully. Then, I thought that a man who really wishes to suffer much for Jesus Christ is like a person in extreme hunger or thirst, who while waiting for something to satisfy him eagerly takes the small amount of food or drink which may happen to come within his reach. I feel a great wish to suffer for God, and I see no sorrow which I would not accept, I think, with much joy; but I esteem it a favour granted by God to His friends, and I find myself so unworthy of it that I do not think God will ever bestow it upon me.

In the meditation on the taking of Jesus Christ, two things touched me greatly and occupied the whole time. The first is the disposition with which Jesus Christ went to meet those who were seeking Him, with the same firmness, courage, and outward composure as if His soul had been in a perfect calm. His Heart is full of a terrible bitterness, all the passions are let loose within Him, the whole nature is unstrung, and amidst all this disturbance and all these temptations the Heart goes straight to God, does not make one false step, does not hesitate to act as the highest virtue suggests. This is a miracle which the Spirit of God can alone perform in a heart, to harmonize war and peace, storm and calm, desolation, and a certain manly fervour which nothing can shake, neither nature nor the devils, nor God himself, Who seems to be armed against us, or at least to abandon us.

The second thing is the disposition of that Heart towards Judas, who was betraying Him, the Apostles who forsook Him in so cowardly a manner, the Priests and the other authors of the persecution He underwent. It is certain that all this could not excite in Him the slightest feeling of hatred or indignation, that it in no wise diminished His love for His disciples and for His persecutors, that He was sincerely and extremely grieved at the injury which they were doing to themselves, and that what He suffered, far from troubling Him, sweetened His sorrow to some extent, because He saw that His sufferings might be a remedy for the ills of His enemies. Therefore I represent to myself this Heart, devoid of all rancour or bitterness, filled with a true tenderness for His enemies, which no perfidy, no ill-treatment could rouse to hatred. Then addressing myself to Mary, to ask for grace to have the same disposition, I perceive a perfect resemblance in hers; she is plunged in grief, but she does nothing unbecoming, she does not lose her judgment in this terrible conjuncture, she wishes the executioners of her Son no evil, on the contrary, she loves them and offers Him for them. This sight delights me, gives me unspeakable love for virtue, and affords me the greatest possible pleasure.

O Hearts truly worthy to possess all hearts, to reign over the hearts of all, of angels and of men! You shall be henceforth my rule, and upon similar occasions I will strive to have your feelings. I wish my heart to be henceforth only in that of Jesus and of Mary, or that of Jesus and of Mary to be in mine, that they may communicate to it their movements, and that it may only be stirred according to the impression which it shall receive from theirs.

At the repetition,—*friend*:—Jesus did indeed love him, or He would not have called him His friend. Jesus Christ longed to convert him, He had chosen the arrow skilfully, and Judas must have been pierced to the heart; but he was like those hopelessly ill to whom the most powerful remedies are given. These produce their effect, but the sick person, not possessing strength to resist the operation, dies instead of being cured.

All is admirable, Jesus Christ led away, Jesus

Christ before the judgment seat, accused and silent. I think that with God's grace I could endure being calumniated and treated as a rogue. I should find therein the complete annihilation of self-love. I think that upon such an occasion I should thank God with my whole heart and should entreat Him to let me die in that condition; however, it is waste of time to think of this since it is not a favour for such as I am. One must be a saint for this. I must endeavour to profit by the small opportunities which offer, and beware lest while entertaining these chimerical wishes, I should pursue vain worldly glory, and let slip these small opportunities.

In meditating upon Saint Peter's fall I understood with wonder and with fear how weak we are. This makes me shudder. I have in me the source and seed of every vice. There is not one which I am not capable of committing. It is only God's grace which prevents me from falling into the abyss of all disorders. How humbling this is! What shame this should cause even to the holiest souls! Therefore Saint Paul said: *In timore et tremore,* etc.: "In fear and trembling."

Jesus Christ spent the whole of that night bound, a butt for the insolence of the soldiers. The thoughts of Jesus during the whole of this night are a beautiful subject for meditation. What more wonderful than to see Jesus Christ, incarnate wisdom, treated as a fool by Herod and all his court? The world has never changed its opinion of the Son of God. With it He still passes for a fool. What courage in Jesus Christ to have despised all the glory and all the respect which He might so easily have gained from this court, to have been willing to allow this king and his officers to continue to consider Him a fool! What a sacrifice to His Father! How glorious this is! How cowardly we are who value so highly the opinion of men, and render ourselves slaves to it! When shall we shake off this shameful yoke? When shall we rise superior to the world? It is worthy of a Christian soul to endure shame which might be avoided, and to rest satisfied with having God alone for witness of a truth which is creditable to us. My God, I wish to become a saint between Thee and me, and to despise any shame which shall not diminish the esteem which Thou mightest have for me. The sight of these generous actions, so superior to nature, seems to elevate my soul above itself and all created things.

What a sight it is to see Jesus Christ brought back to Pilate through Jerusalem clothed like a fool! Pilate condemns Him to be scourged. What justice! Jesus Christ does not complain, though He is aware that the reason of it is the jealousy of the priests and the false complaisance of the judge, and though He foresees the cruelty of the torture. I compared this with our behaviour when we are wronged in any way. How can we complain when we see such an example? I was deeply ashamed at the recollection of the past. The opportunities which I have lost will never return, and of this I am unworthy. I have resolved never to complain of anything. I am persuaded that in whatever manner people treat me they cannot do me injustice.

Nothing touched me so deeply in the flagellation as the contempt shown to Jesus Christ therein. The vilest of men is pitied when condemned to be tortured; stones are flung at an executioner if he causes a thief or a murderer to suffer too severely; and behold Jesus Christ abandoned to the caprice of the soldiers, who tear Him, heap suffering upon suffering, and ill-treat Him with impunity, as if He were not a man. He makes no complaint, but abases Himself still more in the presence of His Father. He accepts all these sufferings from His hand, and is delighted to be able to render Him supreme honour by this terrible abasement. They place a crown of thorns upon His head; this is to expiate the dreadful passion men have to be kings, to excel and to get the better of others in all things.

Pilate brings Him forth: *Ecce Homo*. He must have been in a piteous condition. This is for those who seek prominent positions and applause. They prefer Barabbas. This is strange. We complain of benefits done to others; Jesus Christ does not complain, He places Himself even lower than others did by this unjust comparison. In His heart He was saying all the time to His Father: *Ego vermis et non homo:* "I am a worm and no man." They cried out: *Crucifige:* "Crucify Him," and He consented with all His heart. Are there any Christians in the world like this pattern, this example? If, each time that we break a Rule out of human respect, we were to reflect that we prefer a man to God, I do not think we should often do so. This thought touched me, and I thought that in future I should be inflexible on this point. A man appeared to me so small a thing that I could not understand why we take so much trouble to please some men, when God is the witness of our actions. But alas! will not all these feelings fade away upon the first opportunity.

I am not greatly surprised at the injustice of Pilate in condemning Jesus Christ; but I was extremely touched at seeing Jesus Christ submit to this unjust sentence, take His Cross and bear it with admirable humility, gentleness, and resignation. Having reached the summit of the hill, He allows Himself to be stripped; He stretches Himself upon that Cross, holds out His hands and feet to be pierced, and offers Himself to His Father with feelings of which He only is capable. This sight makes the Cross so pleasing to me that I think I could not be happy without it. I have respect for those whom God visits by humiliations and adversities of any kind. They are doubtless His favourites. In order to humble myself I need only compare myself with them whilst I am in prosperity.

In considering Jesus Christ dying upon the Cross I found that the old man is still alive within me, and that unless God sustains me by His grace I shall be as weak after thirty days of retreat and meditation as before. God will have to work a great miracle to make me die completely to self:

Adhuc vivit in me vetus homo, non est totus crucifixus, et non est perfecte mortuus; bella movet intestina, hoc regnum animae non patitur esse quietum: "The old man lives in me, he is not yet wholly crucified, he is not perfectly dead. It yet raises wars within and does not suffer the kingdom of my soul to enjoy perfect quiet." I have remarked that whenever God has given me this lively feeling of my worthlessness, and I have engaged in prayer after some fault or weakness which made me aware of my imperfections, I have been consoled towards the end of my prayer, and have come out of it much stronger. *Iratus es et misertus es mei, conversus est furor tuus, et consolatus es me:* "Thou art angry and hast had pity upon me; Thy anger is turned away, and Thou hast consoled me." This happens to me even when not praying, after having overcome the temptation by God's grace. This was the case in this meditation, and I came out of it with the new resolution to give no quarter to self-love, and to be on my guard against all its attacks. I earnestly implored this grace from Jesus Christ, laying bare before Him my wretchedness and weakness which every day shows me to be greater.

At the Burial I saw how far I am from the state to which Jesus Christ reduced Himself in order to honour His Father and to serve me. I said with deep feeling: My God, is it possible that so many sufferings, such deep abasement, and so cruel and shameful a death, have all been endured to appease Thy wrath against me, and to draw down Thy graces and blessings upon me, and I am still so imperfect? Eternal Father, has not enough been done to make me a saint? Whence comes it that I do not experience in me a change much more in proportion to such labours? It is a large sum, but let me say to Thee that Thou seemest to have not yet given me the graces which correspond to this price. I expect great results from Thy Son's zeal, but I do not yet experience them to be such as I think I have cause to hope. Perhaps this is because I do not wish to experience these results. But, my God, if it were so I should not offer Thee the death of Thy Son and the sacrifice of the Mass in order to feel them; we do not employ such powerful means as these when we have no wish to obtain anything. We must live as if we were already dead and buried: *Oblivioni datus sum tanquam mortuus a corde:* "I am given over to forgetfulness, as one dead from the heart." For the future I must be, as far as possible, a man of whom no one thinks, who is no longer anything in the world, who is really nothing—such a one I hope really to be.

FOURTH WEEK.

At the Resurrection, what joy for those who had suffered with Jesus Christ, and been truly touched with His sorrows, like Mary, St. John, Magdalen, and the like; for, as to other men, they take as little part in this rejoicing as they did in the sad mysteries which preceded it. With what pleasure and profusion God rewards the sufferings and ignominy of His Son! Not to speak of heaven, the seat of His great glory, on earth, for one Judas who sold Him, how many millions will give up everything in order to possess Him? For one ungrateful, sacrilegious city which disowned Him for its king, how many kingdoms and empires will submit themselves to His power? He was denied by St. Peter; how many millions of martyrs will suffer death rather than deny Him? For the stool of shame, how many altars will He have? For the mockery of the soldiers, how many true adorations? For the purple mantle and the white robe, what riches will adorn His churches and His altars?

In meditating upon the impassibility of Jesus Christ, I examined what could yet touch me. I felt a great repugnance to obey upon a certain occasion. I have conquered this by God's grace and I feel ready for anything. I reflected that it is dangerous to form plans even about things of slight importance, unless one is firmly resolved to quit them all in order to obey or to practise charity. If there be any occupation which one has difficulty in leaving, and which one prefers to retain rather than employ oneself otherwise, or even than to do nothing if God wills, there is a risk of our being humanly attached thereto. I have firmly resolved to be on my guard on this point. We must have this consolation, with God's grace to grant nature nothing. With God's help, before deciding upon anything concerning any proposition made to me, I must consult God and accustom myself to forestall the movement which things occasion in my soul, by raising my mind to God, to see what opinion I ought to have of it according to the rules of the Gospel. Without this care it is impossible to maintain peace of heart and not to fall into many mistakes, because everything has an aspect agreeable or disagreeable to nature, and that is not the manner in which they should be faced. In order not to do so there are no other means than this method of elevation to which all that I have noted down belongs. St. Ignatius' method of making an examen or deliberation at the beginning of each action, especially those in which there is the most danger of making mistakes, is incomparable. I have determined to use it. It cannot fail in time to produce great purity and to maintain great peace of conscience. With God's grace it is not too difficult, and not more so than the examen which ought to follow that same action. When a person is very earnest about his perfection he does this naturally and almost unconsciously.

What a beautiful thing it is to be able to say: *Opus consummavi quod dedisti mihi ut facerem:* "I have completed the work which Thou gavest Me to do." Jesus and Mary could say this when dying. I have observed that when I am determined to imitate Jesus Christ in this during my whole life, nature seems, as it were, surprised at the project, and I feel stronger to do it. To bring myself, for instance, to spend this month, this year, in doing all I can to render my actions agreeable to God and as perfect as possible, requires great vigilance, observance of the Rules, and frequent examens joined with prayer to obtain numerous graces.

At the repetition of the Ascension I noticed that Jesus Christ after suffering, dying, and rising again, leaves Jerusalem, ascends a mountain, and after so many trials, entirely detached from the world and from earth, rises easily to heaven. What prevents us from following Him is that we are still leading a worldly life, plunged in sin or engaged in intercourse with men, or attached to earth where we still find our happiness. St. Paul said: *Conversatio nostra in coelis est:* "Our conversation is in heaven." Happy are they who can say the same! For my part I ask God that I may live between heaven and earth, enjoying neither the pleasures of the world nor those of paradise, in complete detachment, bound only to Him Who is everywhere to be found. It is for us to withdraw ourselves from all earthly pleasures, or at least to take no part in them with pleasure for our motive, to detach our heart from them if we cannot actually renounce them. Let them be a trouble to us on account of the ardent desire we have to deprive ourselves of them out of love to God, and for the sake of the pleasures of heaven. We ought to leave all to God Who knows our strength and Who has His own designs, and we should live in indifference, and be quite ready to do without them.

In the meditation upon the love of God I was deeply touched at the thought of the blessings which I have received from God from the first moment of my life until now. What goodness, what care, what providence for body and soul, what patience and gentleness! I certainly have had no difficulty in giving myself completely to Him, or at least in wishing with my whole heart to be His; for I dare not yet flatter myself that I have thoroughly made this sacrifice. Experience alone can reassure me on this point. I do indeed think that I should be the most ungrateful and miserable of men were I to retain for myself anything whatever. I see that I must be His absolutely, and I could never consent to any division. Still I must see whether I have enough strength and constancy to carry this right feeling into practice. I am very weak, and unable to do this of myself. This truth I know, if I am faithful, my God, Thou wilt have all the glory, and I know not how I could attribute anything to myself. I must entirely forget myself.

In the second meditation upon the love of God, I think God made me penetrate into and clearly see this truth: first, that He is in all creatures; secondly, that He is whatever is good in them; thirdly, that He Himself does for us whatever good we receive from them; and I seemed to see this King of glory and majesty employed in warming us with our clothes, refreshing us with the air, nourishing us with food, making us rejoice in agreeable sounds and objects, and producing in me all the movements necessary in order to live and act. How wonderful! Who am I, O my God, that I should be thus served by Thee in everything, at all times, so assiduously, and with so much care and love? He acts likewise in all other creatures, but it is all for me, like a zealous and watchful steward, who causes work to be done for his king in all parts of the kingdom. What is most admirable is, that God does this for all men, although hardly anyone thinks of it, except some chosen and holy souls. I, at least, must think of this and be grateful. I think that as God's glory is the last end of all His actions, He does all this chiefly for the love of those who remember it, who admire His goodness in so doing, who are grateful to Him, and who take occasion hence to love Him. Others receive the same benefits as if from chance, or through good fortune, just as when one person is entertained or serenaded, many persons enjoy the same pleasure, because they are in the house with him for whom this is done. It is to this that what God said to Saint Teresa refers, that if He had not made the world, He would create it out of love for her.

In the third meditation, I reflected that the offices performed towards us by God through creatures should produce in us great shame and great recollection. When we are waited on by a servant we often receive the service while attending to something else, such as conversing with another person, or even sleeping; but if a person of rank were to lower himself so much as to wish to serve us, we should certainly keep awake. *Domine, tu mihi lavas pedes?* "Lord, dost Thou wash my feet?" This is wonderful to any one who has a little knowledge of Who God is and what we are.

God continually refers to us the existence, life, and actions of all that He has created in the universe. This is His occupation in nature. Ours ought to be always to receive what He sends us from all parts, and to return it to Him by acts of thanksgiving, praising Him, and acknowledging that He is the Author of all things. I have promised God to do this as far as I am able. The exercise of the presence of God is of great utility, but it may be said that it is a very special gift of God to continue it with that sweetness without which it would become hurtful. I only ask of God His love and His grace, and a love with more firmness in it than demonstrativeness or sweetness. I have promised with His grace not to begin any action without remembering that He is witness of it, that He performs it together with me and gives me the means to do it; never to conclude any without the same thought, offering it to Him as belonging to Him, and in the course of the action whenever the same thought shall occur, to stop for a moment and renew the desire of pleasing Him. Upon these words: *Amorem tui solum*, etc.: "Give me Thy love and Thy grace, for they are sufficient for me," I found myself ready to spend my whole life without any consolations, even spiritual ones, contented to serve God with great fidelity, in aridity, or even in temptations.

In order to receive as I ought what I see nature dreads, I should remember, if it comes to pass, that I asked it from God. It is a great sign that He loves me, and I have much cause to hope everything from His goodness. It is a consequence which will confirm me in the sweet thought that all that has happened hitherto has been by a special providence. I promise to accept it as I should do the most agreeable thing in the world without showing to any one any natural inclinations.

End of the Thirty Days' Retreat.

LIGHTS RECEIVED IN MEDITATION.

Absit mihi vel gloriari, vel laetari, nisi in cruce Domini nostri Jesu Christi: "Far from me be it to boast or to rejoice save in the Cross of Jesus Christ our Lord." *Mihi autem pro minimo est ut a vobis judicer, aut ab humano die; qui autem me judicat Dominus est:* "For me it is but little to be judged by you or by any man's day. He that judgeth me is the Lord."

To live every day for that day only.

To hope that I shall die in the occupation in which I am now engaged.

Those who are truly humble are scandalized at nothing because they are well aware of their weakness. They see themselves so near the precipice and are so fearful of falling over it that they are not surprised that others should fall over it.

Father Baltasar Alvarez used to say: What honour is it to preach, if God chooses that I should do so? What is there that is base in the lowest occupations, if I please God by engaging in them?

Cost what it may, let God be pleased with us.

It is strange how many enemies have to be faced from the moment that we resolve to become saints. Everything seems let loose against us, the devil with his artifices, the world with its attractions, and nature by the resistance which it offers to our good desires; the praise of the good, the ridicule of the bad, and the solicitations of the lukewarm. When God visits us we are liable to vanity; when He withdraws Himself, fear and discouragement may succeed the greatest fervour. Our friends tempt us by our habitual complaisance towards them; the indifferent do so by our fear of displeasing them. In fervour, indiscretion is to be feared, in moderation sensuality, and self-love everywhere. What are we to do? *Non est alius qui pugnet pro nobis nisi tu, Deus noster. Nescientes quid agere debeamus, hoc unum habemus residui, ut oculos nostros dirigamus ad te:* "There is no one to fight for us but Thou, our God. Not knowing what we ought to do, this only we have remaining, that we should turn our eyes to Thee."

Above all as holiness does not consist in being faithful for a day or a year, but in persevering and increasing in grace until death, God must be our buckler, a shield which encircles us because we are attacked on every side: *Scuto circumdabit te:* "With a shield will He encompass thee." God must do everything. So much the better; we need not fear that He will fail us in any way. We have only to acknowledge our powerlessness and to be fervent and persevering in asking for help through the intercession of Mary to whom God refuses nothing. Even this we cannot do without a great grace or rather many great graces from God.

By the infinite mercy of God I seem to feel rather more strength against the temptations to vainglory. The same objects present themselves, but with less force, and they no longer produce the same impression. They have begun to weary me, and to appear less delightful. The reasons which prove to me their vanity are much more deeply convincing to me than formerly. This has been the case especially since I made a sincere resolution to renounce them entirely by a way which is extremely efficacious and infallible. I had formed this resolution, and with God's grace should have carried it into execution the next day, if, as I had foreseen, I had not been told not to do so.

Quando bene erit sine illo, aut quando male cum illo! "When was it ever good without Him, or when was it bad with Him?"

When during prayer one finds the time long on account of impatience to pass on to another occupation, it is well to say to oneself: Soul, art thou weary of thy God? Art thou not satisfied with Him? Thou possessest Him, and dost thou seek for something else? Where canst thou be better than in His company? Where canst thou profit more? I have experienced that this calms the mind, and unites it with God.

Since perfection consists in seeking to please God in all things, and to please God only, I was convinced more strongly than usual that we must not hesitate on those occasions when we can please God, though thereby we displease men, and gain some esteem with Him, whilst losing some of that which men have for us. I resolved, therefore, not to hesitate when opportunities present themselves to humble myself and make myself known to men as I really am and have been. I shall have no difficulty in this, if God gives me grace to recollect that the less we are esteemed by men the more we are esteemed by God, and that I wish to please Him only. If I were to pass for a wicked wretch and such a reputation did not increase my merits, I ought to consider it as indifferent, because I do not wish for honour from men; but if this raises me with God I ought to consider it a great good.

I also understood the great happiness of belonging wholly to God, considering His infinite greatness. God honours us highly in calling us to holiness. I understood this by the comparison of a king who chooses one of his subjects to be solely his, who will not allow him to render service to anyone but himself and wishes for his whole friendship; above all if the prince is a person of great merit.

We love the king, though we may never have seen him, and never will see him, although he does not love us, does not know us, and if he were to become acquainted with us he would think nothing of us. We do not, indeed, see God, but we shall see Him eternally. He sees us, loves us, does us good, and is aware of all our thoughts. Can we not love Him? The king is our master, but is not God our Master also, and, moreover, our Creator and our Father, etc.?

If God reigns in us everything will obey Him. His slightest commands will be executed, and nothing will be done without His orders. Moreover, we shall endeavour to please Him in all things; we shall study His inclinations, anticipate His wishes, and always do what we think will please Him most; for these are the two things that belong to kings, blind submission and a perfect conformity. We must then do what pleases God, and what pleases Him most.

The grace of God is seed which must neither be choked nor rashly exposed. It must be cherished in the heart and not displayed too prominently before the eyes of men. There are two kinds of graces, small in appearance, but upon which, nevertheless, our perfection and salvation may depend. The first is a light which discloses to us a truth. We should receive it carefully, and take heed lest it be extinguished through our fault. We should take it for a rule in all our actions, and see to what it leads us, etc. The second is an impulse towards some act of virtue upon certain occasions. We ought to be faithful to these movements, because this fidelity is sometimes a condition of our happiness. A mortification which God suggests to us under certain circumstances, will, if we listen to His voice, perhaps produce in us great fruits of holiness, whilst the contempt of such a grace may have fatal consequences; just as favourites have fallen into disgrace through failing in complaisance about small things.

Having been vexed at a small mortification which I did not expect, I was deeply ashamed, recognising therein the little love I have for the Cross, so that I have reason to think that all the desires which I have felt on various occasions to suffer sorrows and humiliations have been only apparent, or that at least I was looking at something else in these ills rather than God and the Cross of Jesus Christ. Our Lord, continuing in His infinite mercy to take occasion by my own ingratitude to grant me new graces, caused light to follow this shame, which gave me to understand that the love of the Cross is the first step we must take in order to be pleasing to Him; and that I am only now beginning since I am so far removed from the feelings of the saints, who rejoiced at the opportunities for suffering which were sent to them by God. When one looks at our Lord, how cowardly it is to grumble at a small mortification which He sends us! These thoughts gave me a strength which I did not before possess to endure whatever comes, and even to seek it if it does not present itself. This seems to have cured me of a certain timidity and delicacy which made me apprehend amongst other things the severity of the season, and cling to certain comforts which may be dispensed with without much risk. Praised for evermore be the infinite goodness of my God, Who, instead of punishing me for my faults as I deserved, causes me to find therein such great treasures of grace.

The Feast of Saint Andrew: *O bona crux!* "O good Cross!" I was touched at seeing this saint prostrate himself immediately at the sight of the Cross, unable to restrain his joy, which burst forth in these passionate words: *Bona:* "good;" profitable, honourable, agreeable; his one possession, the only thing that concerns him. *Diu desiderata:* "long desired;" he desired it earnestly, hence the time appeared long to him until it came. *Diu sollicite amata:* "long time anxiously beloved." Love cannot be careless; this saint sought the Cross with the eagerness and fear of a man who is afraid of not finding, and who can never find quickly enough. When he meets with it he has found a treasure; his transport resembles that of a lover animated with the deepest love. *Sine intermissione quaesita:* "Sought for without ceasing;" there is our Rule, and by this he merited to find it. *Et aliquando:* "And now found at last;" this denotes strong desire. He must have loved Jesus Christ much in order to find such pleasure in the Cross. We often love men on account of their riches, but to love their sufferings out of love to them is unheard of. It is much if we do not hate them by reason of their wretchedness. *Majorem charitatem nemo habet quam ut animam suam ponat pro fratribus suis:* "Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends." Still there are degrees of this sacrifice, for to die with this joy and eagerness is love incomparable. What faith!

The Feast of Saint Francis Xavier. This saint used to speak of God on every occasion, and to all kinds of persons. Wherever he was, this was his first thought: What service am I to render to my neighbour? There are many opportunities of leading men to God, and these often succeed better than preaching. No one could converse with Berchmans without being set on fire by it. At least let us have the same zeal for one another. What do we speak of with people of the world? In our recreations do we speak like Jesuits? I speak little of Thee, my God! It is because I think of Thee little, and love Thee little.

We can do this, by our example, as John Berchmans, Blessed Aloysius Gonzaga, and Alphonsus Rodriguez did.[1] By our modesty towards strangers and servants; by our regularity and by practising all the virtues. Am I not, on the contrary, a stone of stumbling? If my example were to be followed, would there be regularity and mortification in the house. It is no thanks to me that the Society is not a collection of idle and sensual persons.

[1] These three saints have been canonized since this was written.

We can do it by our prayers and good works. Preaching is useless without grace, and grace is only obtained by prayer. Saint Francis Xavier always began thus; witness the whole Lent which he spent in such horrible austerities that he was ill for a month, in order to obtain the conversion of three soldiers who were leading a disorderly life. Without this would he have obtained so much fruit? Numerous preachers have succeeded him, who have preached as much, but with less fruit. If there are so few conversions amongst Christians, it is because there are few who pray, though there are many who preach. These prayers are most pleasing to God, for it is like asking a mother to forgive her son.

The obedience of Saint Francis Xavier is most worthy of admiration. No sooner do they speak to him of a voyage of six thousand leagues than he is ready as the word is spoken. Saint Ignatius merely says to him: " You must go," and he resists not for a moment. He must leave friends, relations, and country to proceed alone to another world. It requires no argument to persuade him, and he sets out without food, equipment, or books, etc. Do I obey thus? Am I ready to do so? Am I commanded to do what is more difficult? I have made a vow which he had not yet done; do they not speak to me in God's name?

He does so joyfully, he throws himself at the feet of Saint Ignatius, thinking himself fortunate that the choice has fallen upon him and thanks him for it. This is an occasion of great merit, for he believes that God speaks to him by his mouth.

We murmur if we are commanded to do what is difficult, or what is contrary to our inclinations, we do it grumblingly, taking it ill, and thinking that the superior has a grudge against us. Yet we ought to consider it a favour. We only obey when we are ordered to do something which pleases us, and we do it because it pleases us, and not because it is commanded.

He submits his judgment. What likelihood was there that the Apostle of the Indies, the stay of religion in half the world, would be recalled to Europe when on the point of entering China? It was exposing a precious life. There seemed no reason for it, and he did not expect it. When we are in a place which we like, where we think that we do well and succeed in our office, and are in a house where we are useful, what do we say against orders that summon us to go elsewhere? That is the very time when we must obey; it is God Who is acting contrary to all human reason, for causes unknown to us, but which are most advantageous.

The evil is that we do not trust Him. "But that climate, that superior, that occupation." Go in God's name: *Omnem sollicitudinem vestram projicientes in eum, quoniam ipsi est cura de vobis:* "Casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you."

Saint Francis Xavier deemed himself unworthy to obtain anything from God of himself, and employed the merits of Saint Ignatius, the prayers of his brethren, and those of little children. He considered himself a grievous sinner, and attributed the obstacles which opposed the propagation of the faith to his sins, out of a real feeling of humility. What a miracle this humility was in so great a man! But is not pride in us a still greater miracle? What have we done compared with what he did? What a difference in the manner of doing the same things! What shame at seeing ourselves so different! But if, notwithstanding this difference, we are vain, it is a still greater reason for shame.

He esteemed others, Saint Ignatius, those who used to write to him from Europe, and other ecclesiastics. He respected all, spoke of them with admirable gentleness and kindness, served them, and rendered them the meanest offices. We have no reason to despise any one. A humble man sees only his own faults, and it is a sign of small virtue to remark the imperfections of others. Such a one may be imperfect to-day, but in a few days entering into himself he may attain to great holiness. Moreover, our Rule obliges us to regard all others as our superiors: *Inde honor, reverentia, prompta ad serviendum unicuique voluntas*: "Hence come honour, reverence, and a prompt will to serve every one."

When we know our own wretchedness we do not take it ill that others despise us, because we think it just. For this reason Saint Francis Xavier endured patiently, and even joyfully, the contempt and ill-treatment of the bonzes, never becoming angry but answering them gently. A poor beggar is not disturbed when he is rejected, not saluted, or given nothing but refuse. A humble man thinks that justice is done him, whatever ill-treatment he receives. Men do not esteem me, and they are right; in this they agree with God and the angels. A man who has deserved hell thinks contempt his due.

Mirabilis Deus in sanctis suis; magnificus in sanctitate: "God is wonderful in His saints, magnificent in their sanctity." It is not Saint Francis Xavier that I admire, but God Who can perform such great things by a man, in a man, for a man, elevating him to such a high degree of virtue, giving him such a great gift of contemplation, making such great conversions, and working such great miracles. This gave me a high idea of God, and made me understand that it is a great honour to serve Him. It is strange that persons neglect to serve so great a Master, and that so few are willing to devote themselves entirely to Him. How wonderful these conversions are, which must have been so difficult, and which were made in so short a time, by a stranger, badly clothed, who travelled on foot, alone, and ignorant of the language of the nations to which he preached! This man changes the habits and religion of kings, learned men, and of the nations of half the world in ten years, some of these nations inhabiting regions so far apart that it seems almost incredible that he could have visited them in such a short space of time. I conceived a great desire of the conversion of these forsaken people. I asked God that, if it were His will, I might go to carry to them the light of the Gospel; that He would deign to open a way to me, unless He prepares labourers worthy of so high an honour, of which I see myself to be altogether unworthy.

I felt urged to labour to make God known and loved on all occasions, and by every possible means which my weakness allows, sustained by God's grace, fortified by the example of this great saint, and by his powerful intercession with God. I said to him: "If you had so much zeal for a barbarian, with whom you were not acquainted, whom you went to the ends of the earth to seek, will you repel one of your brethren, will you neglect his salvation? Help me, great apostle, to save myself, and I will omit nothing for the salvation of others." Suddenly my mind was strongly illuminated. I seemed to see myself loaded with chains, dragged to prison, accused, condemned, because I had preached Jesus crucified and dishonoured by sinners. At the same time I conceived a strong desire for the salvation of these wretched people who are in error. I thought that I would willingly give the last drop of my blood to save one soul from hell. What happiness for me if at the hour of death I could say to Jesus Christ: "Thou didst shed Thy blood for the salvation of sinners, and I have prevented these persons from rendering it useless to themselves." But what shall I myself say if, whilst thinking of converting others, I am not converted myself? Shall I labour to people paradise and go to fill hell? No, my God, Thou art too good, Thou wilt help me to save myself, Thou wilt strengthen me in the works by which I desire to merit paradise. Must I die by the hand of an executioner, or be dishonoured by some calumny? I shudder at this and am seized with horror. Will God consider me worthy to suffer something great for His honour and glory? I see no sign of it; but if God were to do me this honour I should willingly embrace whatever it might be, prison, calumny, reproaches, contempt, sickness, whatever He wills. It is only our sufferings which please Him. I know not whether I am mistaken, but I feel that God is preparing ills for me to suffer. Send me these ills, O kind Saviour! Procure them for me, O great apostle, for which I shall for ever thank God and praise thee. *Beati eritis cum vos oderint homines et vos persecuti fuerint:* "Blessed shall you be when men shall hate you and persecute you." Lord, send these ills, I will willingly suffer them.

On the Feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin, I resolved to abandon myself so completely to God, Who is always in me, and in Whom I am and live, as not to be troubled about my behaviour, exterior, or even interior, resting gently in His arms, fearing neither temptation nor delusion, nor prosperity, nor adversity, nor my evil inclinations, nor even my faults, hoping that He will guide everything by His infinite goodness and wisdom, so that all will turn to His glory; wishing neither to be loved nor supported by any one, desiring to have Him for my father and mother, my brethren and my friends, and for all who might have some regard for me. One is in peace in so safe and sweet a shelter. I need fear neither men nor devils, neither myself, nor life, nor death. If God will bear with me, I am only too happy. I think that in this I have found the secret of living contentedly, and that henceforth what I used to fear in the spiritual life should no longer cause me alarm.

Why such great purity in Mary? Because she was to be the abode of the Son of God. If she had not been purer than the angels it would not have been fitting for the Word to come into her. He would not have done so with pleasure; He would not have brought these precious gifts with which He filled her at the moment when He was conceived in her. We receive in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar the same Jesus Christ Whom Mary bore for nine months in her womb. What is our purity? What care do we take to prepare our soul? How much there is that is unclean! We commit faults upon the eve, the day, and in the act itself. Nevertheless He comes; what goodness! We go to Him; what temerity! *Exi a me, Domine, quia homo peccator sum:* "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." But does this good God come to us with pleasure? Let us examine what His feelings must be. Is He not repelled by the sight of such deep corruption? And we go to Him boldly, impudently, without shame, contrition or penance. I will try to prepare my heart in such a manner that Thou wilt take pleasure therein, O my God. If only I were careful to purify myself, and knew what I lose, I should put no obstacle to oppose the immense graces which I should receive. But how little my ignorance justifies my negligence! Do I not know what good breeding requires of me when I have to deal with men? Besides all that I drank in with my mother's milk, how many reflections, how much time has been lost in teaching myself? And all this was for the sake of pleasing some one who would turn me into ridicule a moment after; yet perhaps I have never even thought seriously of what I ought to avoid so as not to displease Thee; never seriously thought what is my duty towards Thee. Have I ever thought of it at all? What do I expect, ungrateful and faithless as I am, that Thou shouldst think of me? When didst Thou ever cease to do so? Shall I wait until my misconduct forces Thee to think no longer of me? Kind Saviour, heed it not; I have given Thee so much cause to forget me, to despise me, and only to remember me in order to cast me into hell. Thou hast not done so, God of infinite goodness. I thank Thee for this, and earnestly desire, as one of Thy courtiers, to serve Thee better in future. I will prepare, by my care in purifying myself, to profit by Thy visits, and induce Thee to come to me gladly. Come, my God, and Thou wilt find, by Thy grace, my heart purer and cleaner; if it shall please Thee to do so, take it once for all, great God, lest creatures should deprive Thee of it. I will never consent to that, for I wish to be Thine alone; yet I fear myself more than I fear my most formidable enemies. I trust solely in Thee.

Omnia possum, I will yet say, *et audeo in eo qui me confortat*: I can do all things, and I dare all things in Him that strengtheneth me."

Reflecting yesterday evening after my prayer upon what it was that had well-nigh shaken my resolutions, I discovered that I had not yet overcome human respect, that vain fear of men; and that although by Thy infinite mercy, my God, I have come off well on many occasions, aided by Thy all-powerful grace, yet I recognise my worthlessness, and I feel that it is Thou alone Who workest whatever is good in me. I should continually offend Thee grievously if Thou didst not stretch forth Thy hand to withdraw me from the mire into which my inclinations would lead me, into which my too-yielding disposition would plunge me, if Thou didst not use towards me the dominion which Thou hast over all creatures. But, my God, what thanks shall I render to Thee for all the benefits Thou hast done me? However unworthy and ungrateful I am, I will praise Thee for them, kind Saviour, and will proclaim everywhere that Thou alone art to be loved, served and praised. In order to establish me in this truth, Thou gavest me to understand that human respect makes us do evil through fear of offending men, causes us to omit what is good through fear of not pleasing them, or makes us do good to please them. Indeed I perceive that from fear of displeasing men one gives without permission, breaks silence, and hears evil speaking and murmuring, and one does not inform superiors when one ought to do so. It is a strange thing that any one should prefer to draw down upon himself God's anger rather than run the risk of offending man, *cui similem me fecistis:* "Like to whom Thou hast made me." Shame and sorrow so to act in God's sight, notwithstanding His threats and His promises! What do I expect from that man? What have I to fear from him? In religion one must often have good desires, but it is strange that we often fail to carry them into execution through fear of men. What will they say if I wish to be exact, devout, mortified? I have taken a certain line, and if I had to begin again I would do otherwise; but I should be taken for a bigot. I would gladly do such and such a thing if I dared. *Qui me erubuerit coram hominibus:* "He that shall be ashamed of Me before men." Saint Frontina, *ita timebat Deum ut ab hominibus timeretur:* "She so feared God that men feared her." Shall I have less strength, knowledge, and resolution than Brother Ximenes, who, when about to become a Jesuit, made this vow? *Promitto tibi, Deus meus, nihil me facturum quod non sit amoris tui causa. Ego enim nescio quo eam, ut alicui serviam nisi tibi, qui es Deus meus ac Dominus meus:* "I promise Thee, O my God, that I will do nothing that is not for Thy love's sake. There is no place to which I would go to serve any one but Thee, Who art my God and my Lord."

If we are not upon our guard, we lose almost our whole life, through the wish to please men. What is our obligation towards them, and what benefit do we expect from them? In this we are more unfortunate and contemptible than those who labour for money. But what a mistake it is! These men whom I foolishly fear in religion expect to see me practise the good which I am afraid to do in their presence, and treat me as a fool and a madman when I fail to do so. They know that I withdrew from the world in order to be virtuous, devout, and mortified, and they see that I am not so. This is a fool, they say, who swerves from his end; if he wished to live in this manner why did he not remain in the world, where he might without sin have been what it is dangerous for him to be in religion? This is what those think of me whose opinion I fear. My God, am I not most miserable to offend Thee and not to please men? If I were to do as much for Thee, Thou wouldst judge me favourably, and men would not have this contempt for my conduct; for every man of good sense values virtue, even if he does not practise it.

When I consider my inconstancy I shudder and fear to be among the lost. What disorder, what violent changes are in me! At one time I am gay, at another sad: to-day caressing everybody, to-morrow like a hedgehog which pricks if it is touched. It is a sign of small virtue; it is because nature still reigns within us, and our passions are unmortified. A truly virtuous man is always the same. If I sometimes do good, it is rather from caprice than from virtue. A man who leans upon

God is immovable, and cannot be shaken. Father Caraffa used to say: "When anything annoying happens I am contented, because I have no other will but God's will." O blessed state of peace and calm! We must fight in order to reach it.

I know, my God, and experience has taught me but too well, that one is good one day and bad the next, that we relax insensibly. Why am I no longer what I was in the novitiate? Do we think that we have done enough to earn God and paradise? Do we compare our merits with those of the saints? We have received fresh graces, therefore our gratitude should increase; we are nearer death, and have become wiser and more enlightened; whence comes it, then, that we are changed for the worse? Reason must make us retrace our steps. The slightest thing makes me forget my good resolutions; how shall I guard against this? How shall I act?

The Feast of Saint John the Baptist. Saint John, though innocent, spends his life in continued penance. This is the spirit of Christianity. We ought always to practise this virtue, because we have sinned. If we have only done so once, we know not whether God has forgiven us. Saint Peter and Saint Mary Magdalen wept until their death. I have deserved hell, I have crucified my God, this should keep me humble and maintain a holy hatred of myself in my heart. I sin daily; I scarcely perform even a holy action in which there is not something deserving of purgatory. Therefore constant contrition is most necessary and beneficial. Saint Ignatius used to make an examen after each action. I commit more sins than he did, and I scarcely think of them; what blindness.

I can still sin; what a wretched condition of life! This danger renders life very bitter to all who love God, and who know the value of grace; but it renders penance and mortification very pleasing to them, for it is a most efficacious means of preventing this misfortune. It subdues the flesh, weakens nature, avoids occasions, and removes objects, etc. Holy penance! sweet penance!

The consideration of the virtues of our brethren ought to inspire those who possess true charity with feelings of joy because they have these virtues, and because God is glorified in them. *Non gaudet super iniquitate, congaudet autem veritati:* "Charity rejoiceth not in iniquity but rejoiceth in the truth." Are we not grieved thereat? We ought to thank God for it, and ask Him that they may persevere and become perfect. In this way we have a share in whatever good they do, in hearing confessions, in mortifications, in missions, etc., and sometimes a larger part than they have on account of the disinterestedness. Saint Augustine said: You are jealous because your brother is more mortified than you are; rejoice in his mortification, and henceforth it is yours. No, my God, I am not jealous of the virtues of my brethren. *Soror nostra* *est, crescat:* " Our sister it is; may she grow." I am humbled and ashamed when I compare myself with them. There are few of them in whom I do not find something excellent which I do not possess. They may have faults, but most of these are involuntary, and a sinner like myself ought scarcely to observe them, but should excuse them, and keep my eyes fixed upon my own. Their virtues are generally true virtues. This will maintain humility, respect and charity. Do I act thus? No: this is a sign of pride. Instead of jealousy, kindle in me, O my God, a holy desire to imitate them and to profit by their example. They will condemn me at the judgment day. They should rouse and encourage me now. They are visible admonitions which God gives me. *Et non poteris quod isti?* etc.: " Canst thou not do what these can do?" The example of the saints of old ought to touch us less than that of our brethren which we have before us daily. I see them self-controlled, though possessing a fiery temperament; practising the most repulsive humiliations, though of high birth; I see them austere and mortified, though of an extremely delicate constitution. What a shame for me to have before me such examples of humility in persons of rank, of such severe mortification in bodies so delicately nurtured, and not to profit by them to become better myself!

God is in the midst of us, and we seem not to recognise Him. He is in our brethren and wishes to be loved, served, and honoured in them, and He will reward us more highly for this than if we served Him in His own Person. How do I behave? Do I love and honour all my brethren? If I except one of them, it is not Jesus Christ Whom I behold in them. It seems that I do not recognise Him there. If I love them it is for their sake in order to be loved and valued by them, because their disposition accords with mine. Let each behold in his brother our Lord Jesus Christ.

He is in the midst of us in the Blessed Sacrament. What a consolation to be in a house where Jesus Christ dwells! But might it not be said that we do not know how fortunate we are? Do we often visit Him? Do we go to Him in our needs? Do we consult Him in our plans? Do we carry our small vexations to Him instead of taking counsel with our friends, complaining, murmuring, etc.? *Medius vestrum stetit*, etc.: "There hath stood one in the midst of you Whom you know not." God is in the midst of us, or rather we are in the midst of Him; wherever we are, He touches us, in prayer, at our work, at table, and in conversation. We think not of it; for with what fervour and devotion I should perform my actions if, whilst engaged in study, or prayer, or any other occupation, I thought that a superior was secretly watching me! Let us often make acts of faith, let us often say: God sees me, He is here. Never let us do anything when alone, which we would not do if all eyes were upon us.

Christmas Day. I considered, with much clearness and delight, the excellence of the acts practised by the Blessed Virgin at the birth of her Son. I admired the purity of that heart, and of the love with which it burnt for the divine Child; nothing that was natural tarnished its holiness, yet it surpassed in ardour and tenderness the natural love of all the mothers in the world. I seemed to see the movements of that heart, and was enraptured.

Since Christmas Eve I have been much occupied with a most consoling thought which led me to practise frequently, and with much sweetness, the following acts. Of joy, at the thought that throughout the Christian world the greater number of the faithful are thinking of honouring God and sanctifying themselves; chiefly holy persons, fervent religious, and many choice seculars who live in a most perfect manner and who spend the eve and feast of Christmas in holy exercises. The air seems embalmed with their devotion, and all the virtues united seem to make an admirable perfume which ascends to heaven and there causes great joy. Of thanksgiving, for the favours which God bestows upon holy souls and upon all Christians. Of petition, that it may please God to purify and kindle their sacrifice and mine. Thou comest, my God, to bring this holy fire, and what desirest Thou, but that it be kindled and the whole world be inflamed thereby. All Thy faithful servants labour earnestly and perseveringly to merit some spark of it, and Thou wilt recompense their holy labours. As for me, God of mercy, I do not ask for rewards.

Indeed, what have I yet done to deserve a reward? I only ask, Almighty God, that Thou treat me not severely. Forgive my unfaithfulness when Thou seest all the good performed by my brethren who serve Thee so religiously. If my weakness and wanderings have repelled and irritated Thee, punish me in this world. I have a body which is good for nothing but to suffer. Cause it to feel the weight of Thy justice, I shall not complain, but in the midst of sickness and calumny, in prisons and in shame, with the three children of Babylon I will praise Thee and bless Thee, feeling certain that if Thou art good enough to punish me in this world, Thou wilt spare me in the next.

I felt an earnest desire to imitate the fervour of those holy religious and fervent Christians who spend these days in constant intercourse with God in His humiliations, to offer some heroic mortifications to God, to remain united to God, become a child; and I felt so powerfully drawn to this that I could scarcely entertain any other thought. It took such strong hold of me that I was indifferent to all else. My God, Thou art very good to reward so liberally the violence which I have done myself. Cease, kind and sovereign Master, to load me with Thy favours. I acknowledge how unworthy I am of them. Thou wilt accustom me to serve Thee from self-interest, or lead me into excesses; for what should I not do, if Thou didst not oblige me to obey my director, in order to merit one moment of the sweetness which Thou dost bestow upon me? Did I say merit? Forgive me that word, O loving Father. The excess of Thy goodness troubles me, so that I know not what I say. Can I merit the graces and consolations with which Thou dost forestall and overwhelm me? No, my God, Thou alone, by Thy sufferings obtainest for me from Thy Father all the favours I receive. For ever blessed be Thou. Load me with sufferings and trials that I may have some part in Thine. I shall not believe that Thou lovest me if Thou dost not make me suffer much and long. The fault was mine. Is it just that the child should be punished instead of the servant?

The maternity of Mary was most pure. She brought forth Jesus Christ without any loss of integrity. No stain tarnished the holiness of that childbirth. It is thus that apostolic persons should bring forth Jesus Christ in hearts. It sometimes happens that in purifying others a man defiles himself. Indeed it is very common, and it is a kind of miracle to see a man who loses none of his humility and holiness in acts of zeal, and who seeks God only therein.

God allowed us to fall into the depths of misery that He might have occasion to manifest His love towards us. But our misery, great as it was, came far short of His zeal. One drop of blood would have healed us, yet His love could not be satisfied with so little, and He emptied His veins. This was not necessary in order to heal our ills, but it was so for the manifestation of His love.

I find consolation in contrasting with the opinion of men who esteem us and count us as something the judgment of God, in Whose presence we are but atoms, in no way necessary to Him, with whom He could dispense as easily as if we had never been, He being able to accomplish without us whatever He designs to perform. He has innumerable servants more zealous, faithful, and pleasing in His eyes. He can in an instant create an infinity of others more skilful, and He can use the meanest of men for His most magnificent designs. How wonderful this is, good God, if Thou wouldst some time use my weakness to withdraw some unfortunate from the gates of death! If it is only necessary that I should desire this, I desire it with my whole heart. It is true that one needs to be a saint in order to make other saints, and my grave faults show me how far removed I am from holiness; but make me holy, my God. Spare me not, in order that Thou mayest make me good; for I wish to become so at any cost.

In meditating upon the truth that there is a God, and that God is a Being Who has nothing of non-existence, Who can lose nothing and acquire nothing, Who includes in Himself all being, and is its source, Who can depend upon no being whatever for existence, or for higher existence; I was penetrated with profound respect for this incomprehensible greatness. I seem never before to have so fully comprehended the nothingness of all things as by contrasting them with this idea. The angels, the great saints, even the Blessed Virgin and the holy Humanity of Jesus Christ, which have nothing of themselves and depend entirely on God, all these appeared to me as nothing in comparison with God. Great was my astonishment when I reflected that this God, so great and so independent as I represented Him to myself, deigns to think of men, and to amuse Himself, so to say, in answering their prayers, requiring their services, and considering their faults. It seemed like a great king taking care of an ant-hill. If He should damn us all solely for His good pleasure, it would be like a man diverting himself by killing flies and crushing nuts. What recalls me from my wonder is that He is as good and merciful and kind as He is great. It is an abyss of greatness, it is true, but it is also an abyss of mercy. This revives my hopes, and makes me dare to approach Him in order to speak to Him, whilst without this consideration I should not even dare to think of God. Yet I will think of this, my God, not in order to know Thee: in order to know Thee we must cling no longer to earth, and I feel how strongly my heart still leans towards worldly things. So many desires to be esteemed, loved, and praised, though the glory and the praise are due to Thee alone, and so much love for my own comfort make me shudder, for when I think myself most secure from the attacks of self-love, I find that it has taken me by surprise and made sport of me, to my shame and my confusion. Open my eyes, therefore, kind Jesus: *Domine ut videam:* "O Lord, that I may see."

I do not ask to see Thee nor to know Thee; grant me only light to see myself as I really am, and henceforth, knowing myself thoroughly, I shall infallibly know Thee. *Noverim me, noverim te:* "Let me know myself, let me know Thee." I cannot know myself without knowing Thee. My imperfections will give me an earnest wish to know something better than creatures. What is there above creatures, of higher value than the Creator? *Ad te omne desiderium meum:* "To Thee is all my desire." All else displeases me, and myself more than all the rest; for I know nothing more repulsive, contemptible, and worthless.

This view of the greatness and independence of God on the one hand, and of the nothingness of all creatures on the other, disclosed to me the baseness and the cowardice of those who make themselves dependent upon men, and the generosity and happiness of others who desire to depend only on God. The only means to withdraw us from the dreary nothingness in which we are, is to attach ourselves to God. *Qui adhaeret Deo unus spiritus est:* "He that adheres to God is one spirit with Him." We thus raise ourselves from the dust, and become in some manner like unto God.

In considering the spirituality of God, I understood how God, Who is all spirit, can be enjoyed, heard, seen, and embraced by the spiritual senses. This thought was an inward, strong persuasion of the presence of God, which faith makes, as it were, sensible to the soul, in such a way that it doubts not of it; and needs not to do violence to itself nor to reason to be convinced of it. This disposition in which I found myself gave me a strong desire to mortify my exterior senses, the disorders and operations of which are the only obstacles to the soul in the use of its spiritual senses. *Animalis homo non percipit ea quae sunt spiritus Dei:* "The animal man perceiveth not those things that are of the spirit of God." I am not surprised that carnal men do not know God, for God is a Spirit, and the spirit is dead, or at least dying, in a carnal man.

The simplicity of God seems to me admirable. That nature which excludes all component parts, whether essential, integral, or accidental, which is all things and one thing only, which is its own existence, which is all that it has, wisdom, goodness, eternity, power, etc. I picture to myself a flower with the scent of every flower. Perhaps a composition might be made in which all these odours might be found; but how marvellous if one in all its simplicity possessed them all, in all its parts, and in the highest perfection. A fruit which should have the flavour of all fruits, a gem which should possess the colours of all others, a plant with the virtues of all other plants, etc. *In te uno omnia habentes, non debemus dimittere te:* "Having all things in Thee alone, we cannot let Thee go."

I felt myself moved to imitate this simplicity of God: 1. In my affections, loving God only, cherishing no other love but this, which is easy, since I find in God all that I can love elsewhere; and thus my heart will resemble what Scripture says of God: *Sanctus, unicus, et multiplex:* "Holy, single, manifold." But my friends, they love me and I love them; Thou seest this and I feel it. My God! alone good, alone amiable! Must I sacrifice these to Thee, since Thou desirest to have me entirely? I will make this sacrifice, which will cost me more dearly than the first which I made Thee in leaving father and mother. So I make this sacrifice with my whole heart, since Thou dost forbid me to share my friendship with any creature. Accept this painful sacrifice, but in exchange, divine Saviour, be Thou their friend. As Thou wilt take their place with me, take my place with them. I will remind Thee of them daily in my prayers, and of what Thou owest them in me, in promising to be my substitute. Happy are they if they profit by this gain! I will importune Thee so urgently that I will induce Thee to make them know and value the blessing they will possess in the command Thou givest me, to have no longer any friend, in order to be Thine. Jesus, be Thou their friend, their sole and real friend! Be my friend, since Thou commandest me to be Thine. 2. In my intentions: *Si oculus tuus simplex fuerit, totum corpus lucidum erit:* "If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light." To seek God alone, not even to seek His gifts, His graces, nor the benefits we receive in His service, such as peace, joy, etc., but Him only.

It is an excellent means of detaching the heart from everything to have frequent change of place and occupation. We attach ourselves insensibly, and take root, which is evident from the pain which separation causes us. It is a sort of death to leave a place where one is known and has friends. This thought will ever enable me to endure this separation calmly, namely, that God will accompany me everywhere, and that I shall find the same Lord wherever I go. In this respect I have no change. It is the same God Whom I pray to here, Who knows me, loves me, and Whom alone I wish to love.

Qui solus habet immortalitatem: "Who alone hath immortality." God only is immortal. Others all die; kings, relations, friends, those who esteem us, or whom we have obliged, become separated from us by death or absence. We separate from them, and the remembrance of our benefits, and their esteem, friendship, and gratitude fade away. The pleasures of sense have, as it were, but a moment's life. God alone is in every sense immortal. As He is quite simple He cannot die from the separation of the parts of which He is composed; as He is completely independent, He cannot fail through the withdrawal of an extraneous concurrence which preserves Him. Moreover, He can neither depart nor change. He will not only be for ever, but He will ever be good, ever faithful, ever reasonable, ever beautiful, liberal, lovable, powerful, wise, and altogether perfect. The pleasure we experience in possessing Him is a pleasure which will never end. It is unchangeable, and depends not upon times nor places. It never produces disgust; on the contrary, it is continually becoming more delightful in proportion as we enjoy it.

God is perfect in every way. It is impossible to find in Him anything that is not infinitely good. He is wise, prudent, faithful, good, liberal, beautiful and gentle, despising nothing that He has created, valuing us, and governing us with gentleness, and even with respect. He is patient and exempt from all ill-regulated movements of the passions. He possesses all that we love in creatures. All is united in Him, and for ever, in a manner which is infinitely more perfect. He has none of the defects which shock, repel, and disgust us in created objects. Whence comes it then that we do not love Him alone? What is there to justify this distaste? When we find something most perfect of its kind, we cannot endure anything else. A fine voice skilfully managed produces in us a strange disgust at bad singers; a man who is a good judge of painting, and who has studied for some time the originals of Raphael and Titian, will not condescend to look at other paintings. When a man has lived amongst well-bred and educated people, he cannot accustom himself to less delicate and refined conversation.

God is not only perfect, but He is also the source of all perfection. In Him alone can we obtain it, and we do so by studying and considering Him. *Similes ei erimus, quoniam videbimus eum sicuti est:* "We shall be like to Him, for we shall see Him as He is." This will be the case in heaven; and in this life, the more we study Him, the nearer we approach to this resemblance. We have a grave obligation to be perfect, because in one who preaches virtue and makes a profession of it, imperfections injure others more than virtue profits them. They give occasion to believe that there is no true holiness, that perfection is impossible, and that it is all delusion and nonsense. Even when imperfections do not give rise to such thoughts, they make cowards imagine that they are not inconsistent with holiness. It is quite enough to lull to rest an imperfect person, and to cherish in his heart a passion which flatters him, some shadow of which he loves to have observed in a man who has a reputation for worth. He considers himself authorised thereby to go on gratifying his self-love, and thinks that he will be none the less a saint on that account.

Thinking of the Eternity of God, I represented it to myself as an immovable rock on the edge of a river, whence God beholds all creatures pass by, He Himself not stirring nor passing. Those who attach themselves to things created appeared to me like people who, being swept along by the current, cling, some to a plank, others to the trunk of a tree, others to a mass of foam, which they take for something solid. The whole is carried away by the torrent, friends die, health wastes away, life passes, and they arrive at Eternity, borne upon their temporary supports to an ocean which they cannot avoid, and in which they must perish. They perceive how imprudent they have been in not attaching themselves to the rock, to the Eternal. They would fain go back, but the waves have carried them too far, they cannot return, and must perish with perishable things. On the other hand a man who has attached himself to God beholds without fear the peril and loss of all others. Whatever happens, whatever revolution takes place he is ever upon his rock, God cannot slip from him, he has embraced Him only; he is ever in His grasp, and adversity only makes him glad at the happy choice which he has made. He possesses his God always; the death of friends, relations, and of those who valued and favoured him, separation, change of employment or of place, old age, sickness, and death, in no way deprive him of his God. He is always equally contented, saying in the peace and joy of his soul: *Mihi adhaerere Deo bonum est, ponere in Domino meo spem meam:* "For me to adhere to God is good, to place my hope in the Lord." This thought touched me deeply. I think that I understood this truth, and that God granted me grace to be so surely convinced of it, that it gave me great courage and facility to detach myself from everything, and to seek God alone during my whole life in all the paths wherein it shall please Him for me to walk, never exhibiting any inclination nor repugnance, blindly accepting any office to which my superiors shall appoint me. If it should sometimes happen that the choice is left to me by my superiors, I promise, O my God, and hope by Thy holy grace to keep my word, I promise to renew the vow which Thou hast inspired me to make, always to choose the office and place for which I feel the strongest repugnance, and in which I believe I shall have most to suffer. Thou, O Jesus, hast given me an example of this, and as far as I am able, I wish to guide myself by Thy example and by Thy teaching which can alone lead me to Thee, and withdraw me from the perplexities of ignorance and from the errors into which my passions might plunge me.

RETREAT

OF THE

VENERABLE FATHER

CLAUDE DE LA COLOMBIÈRE.

MADE IN LONDON IN THE YEAR 1677.

THOSE who read this retreat will be perplexed unless they are furnished with the points of the memorandum of which Père de la Colombière speaks in the third and fifth days of this journal of his Spiritual Exercises. This memorandum was given to him when he left France to go to England as preacher to her Royal Highness the Duchess of York. The probity and virtue of the person who gave the Father this paper caused him to preserve it carefully; it contains the three following articles.

[It is needless to say that this person was the Blessed Margaret Mary Alacoque.]

1. "The talent of Père de la Colombière is to bring souls to God: therefore the devils will use their efforts to resist Him; even persons consecrated to God will cause Him trouble, and will not approve of what he says in his sermons to lead them to God; but the goodness of God in his crosses will

be his support in proportion as he trusts himself to Him.

2. " He ought to have compassionate sweetness with sinners, and only use energy when God makes known to him that he should do so.

3. " Let him take great care not to separate good from its source. This saying is short, but contains many things which God will give him to understand according to the application which he makes of it."

I find myself in a completely different disposition from that which I was in two years ago. I was then filled with fear, and was disinclined to acts of zeal, from the apprehension I was under of not being able to escape from the snares of an active life, in which I foresaw that my vocation was about to engage me. That fear has now vanished, and I am strongly inclined to labour for the salvation and sanctification of souls. I seem only to love life for this end, and only to love sanctification because it is an admirable means of winning many hearts to Jesus Christ.

I think that the reason why I am in this disposition is that I no longer feel such a passion for vainglory. This is a miracle which only God could work in me. Prominent offices do not attract me as they formerly did. I seem now only to seek for souls, and that those in small places and in villages are as dear to me as others. Moreover, by the mercy of God I am far from being influenced by the praise and esteem of men as I used to be, though I am still too much affected by it. I was formerly so much troubled by this temptation that it deprived me of all courage, and almost caused me to lose the hope of saving myself whilst attending to the salvation of others. So that if I had been free to do so, I doubt not that I should have spent my days in solitude.

This temptation was first weakened by something which N.N [Blessed Margaret Mary] once said to me, namely, that when praying for me our Lord intimated that my soul was dear to Him, and that He would take special care of it, upon which I answered: "How can this accord with what I experience in myself? Can our Lord love a person so vain as I am, a person who only seeks to please men, and to be valued by them, and who is full of human respect?"—"Father," was the reply, "all this does not dwell within you." These words calmed me, and I began to be less disturbed about these temptations, besides which, they became weaker and less frequent.

However, two things contributed more than all else to give me this desire to labour for the salvation of souls: the success which it has pleased God to grant to the small attentions which I have paid to some one, and what some one else caused to be said to me on my departure, and which I had given to me in writing. I daily perceive things which afford me reason to believe that they were not mistaken. May God give me grace to make a good use of so many blessings, of which I had rendered myself most unworthy.

The thought that God has made me entirely for Himself seems to elevate me above creatures, and places me in liberty and independence which produces great repose in my heart, and a strong desire to wear myself out in His service. I earnestly wish, if it be possible, never to resist God's will. I feel a strong desire to obey all His inspirations, especially since a person who is extremely familiar with God tells me that our Lord had intimated that I had long been resisting Him concerning something about which I hesitated, as I thought, through fear of not acting prudently.

The third day of my exercises, I perceived that the first point on the paper which had been given to me at my departure for London, which point had been confirmed by a letter which I received two months ago, was but too true. For since my departure from Paris the devil has spread five or six snares for me, which gave me much trouble. From them I have only escaped by special grace, and after having been guilty of much cowardice. I know not how it was that the trouble which these things caused me did not show me this. They were not things absolutely bad, but things in which I was in doubt as to which of the two was the better, and the side of nature was so much strengthened by the devil's temptation that it prevented me from seeing what was most perfect, or at least deprived me of power to embrace it, so that I remained much troubled, and in anxiety which has now, thank God, ceased, through the grace which our Lord has given me to see the truth, and to cause me to embrace it.

The fifth day, God caused me, if I mistake not, to understand the third point of the memorandum which I brought from France: "Let him take great care not to separate good from its source: this saying is short, but contains many things, and God will cause him to understand it according to the application which he makes of it." I had often pondered these words, "separate good from its source," without being able to fathom them. To-day, having observed that God was to give me to understand them according to the application which I should make, I meditated long, and found only this: that I was to refer to God whatever good He might be pleased to perform through me, since He is the only source of it. But when I had with difficulty turned away my thoughts from this consideration, all of a sudden light flashed into my mind, by the help of which I saw the doubt which had troubled me during the first two or three days of my exercises clearly solved, concerning the use which I ought to make of my salary. I understood that this saying includes a great deal, because it urges us to the perfection of poverty, to great detachment from vainglory, to perfect observance of the Rules, and the source of deep peace, interior and exterior, and of many most edifying acts. By following another path, under whatever pretext I might have sheltered myself, 1, I should have departed from the perfection of poverty; 2, I should have had to ask for dispensations unnecessarily; 3, I should have greatly encouraged vainglory and self-love; 4, I should have exposed myself to external cares which would have occupied me much; 5, I should have run the risk of scandalising those in France and encouraging them to love the world, and I should at least have deprived those in England of a good example; 6, I was about to entangle myself amongst the thorns with which avarice is wont to be accompanied, and I was beginning to be very uneasy thereat. It is wonderful, and makes me see how good Thou art, O my God, that Thou hast given me grace to bind myself by vow to follow this counsel before giving me to understand it. I cannot express the joy, gratitude, trust in God, and courage which this thought has given me. There still remained some parts which I had not included in the vow, but I am now, please God, at rest concerning this for life. Blessed a thousand times be God, Who has hereby given me to know His mercy, and the holiness of the person through whom He was pleased to give me this advice.

In the second article I found a remedy against a temptation which has troubled me much since my arrival here. I found clearly stated there the conduct I ought to have observed towards some one whose actions displeased me. I know not how it was that I failed to see this sooner; praised be God, Who has at last caused me to do so. This paper contained the precise rules which I needed to withdraw me from the snares of the devil; only one point remains, the execution of which God will permit when it pleases Him. My whole trust is in Him.

The sixth day, when considering the special vow which I had made, I felt touched with deep gratitude to God, Who gave me grace to make this vow. I had never had so much leisure to consider it. I felt great joy at seeing myself bound by so many chains to do God's will. I was in no wise terrified at the thought of so many delicate and strict obligations, because God seems to have filled me with great confidence, that I have fulfilled His will in making these engagements, and that He will help me to keep my word. It is quite plain that without special protection it would be almost impossible to keep this vow. I have renewed it with my whole heart, and I hope that our Lord will never let me break it.

Seventh day. I observed to-day that although God has granted me numerous graces in this retreat, this has scarcely at all been in my meditations. On the contrary, I had much greater difficulty in them than usual. I do not know if this proceeded from my determination to keep to the usual points, for which I feel little attraction. I think that I could have spent several hours without exhaustion or fatigue in considering God around me and in me, sustaining and helping me in praising Him for His mercy, in maintaining feelings of trust, in desires to belong to Him unreservedly, and to destroy whatever in me is of myself, in desires to glorify Him, and to make Him glorified by others, in the prospect of my own weakness, and of the great need I have of being aided from above, in contentment at whatever God wills, whether concerning me or concerning those with whom I am connected. Yet when I endeavoured to meditate upon a mystery I was fatigued from the first, and my head was splitting, so that I can truly say that I never had less devotion in meditation. I have thought that in the future it would be well to continue my former practice of uniting myself to God present by faith, and then keeping this up by acts of the other virtues to which I felt inclined. This way is not, I think, liable to delusion, because it is most true that God is in us and we in Him, and that this presence should be a powerful motive of respect, confidence, love, joy, and fervour. Above all, the imagination does not participate in the care which we take to represent to ourselves this truth, and we only employ for this purpose the light of faith.

This eighth day, I think that I have found a great treasure, if only I know how to turn it to my profit. This is a firm trust in God, founded upon His infinite goodness, and upon the experience which I have had that He will not fail us in our needs. Moreover, I find in the memorandum which was given me on leaving France that He promises to be my strength according to my confidence in Him. For this reason I have determined to set no bounds to my trust, and to extend it to everything. I think that in future I ought to use our Lord as a buckler to surround me, which I will oppose to all the darts of my enemies. Thou wilt be my strength, O my God! Thou wilt be my guide, my director, my counsellor, my patience, my peace, my justice, and my prudence. I will have recourse to Thee in my temptations, aridity, disgust, weariness, and fears; or rather, I will no longer fear delusions, nor the artifices of the devil, nor my own weakness, nor my indiscretion, nor even my distrust, for Thou wilt be my strength in all my crosses. Thou dost promise to be so in proportion to my trust, and the wonder is that, together with this condition, this trust appears to me more and more to be Thy gift. For ever loved and praised by all creatures be Thou, kind Saviour! What could I do if Thou wert not my strength? But being so as Thou dost assure me, what cannot I perform for Thy glory? *Omnia possum in eo qui me confortat:* "I can do all things in Him Who strengthens me." Thou art everywhere in me, and I in Thee: wherever I am, whatever danger or whatever enemy threatens me, my strength is ever with me. This thought can in an instant banish all my troubles, and above all the rebellion of nature which is so powerful in certain moments, that I cannot help trembling for my perseverance, and shuddering at the thought of the state of complete deprivation to which God does me the favour to call me. Every text of Scripture which speaks of hope, comforts and strengthens me. *In te Domine, speravi, non confundar in aeternum. . . . In pace in idipsum dormiam et requiescam; quoniam tu, Domine, singulariter in spe constituisti me. . . . Diligam te, Domine, fortitudo mea. . . . Dominus firmamentum meum et refugium meum. . . . Dominus illuminatio mea et salus mea, quem* *timebo? . . . Laus mea et fortitudo mea Dominus:* "In Thee, O Lord, I have hoped, let me not be confounded for ever. In peace in the self-same I will sleep and take my rest; for Thou, O Lord, hast singularly placed me in hope. May I love Thee, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my firmament and my refuge. The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? My praise and my strength is the Lord." He shall also be, if He wills, my gratitude.

In concluding this retreat, filled with confidence in God's mercy, I have made it a rule to myself to promote by all possible means the execution of what has been prescribed to me by my adorable Master concerning His precious Body in the Sacrament of the Altar, in which I believe Him to be truly and really present. Touched with pity for those blind persons who will not submit to believe this great and ineffable mystery, I would gladly shed my blood to persuade them of this truth which I believe and profess. In these countries where they make it a point of honour to doubt Thy real presence in this august Sacrament, I feel much consolation in making several times a day acts of faith in the reality of Thy adorable Body under the species of bread and wine. My heart expands whenever I apply myself to make acts of faith concerning the truths taught by the Church of Rome, which is the only true Church, outside of which there is no salvation. My heart expands, I say, upon such occasions, and feels the sweetness which I receive from the mercy of God, without being able to explain it. For ever praised and blessed be Thou, my God, for Thy goodness in communicating Thyself to the most thankless of Thy creatures, and most unworthy of Thy servants. I have recognised that God wished me to serve Him by obtaining the fulfilment of His desires concerning the devotion which He has suggested to a person to whom He communicates Himself in great confidence. For this He has been pleased to use my weakness. I have already suggested it to many persons in England, and I have written to France on the subject, and begged one of my friends to promote it where he is. It will be most useful there, and the large number of choice souls in that community makes me think that the practice of it in that holy house will be highly pleasing to God. My God, if only I could be in all places, and proclaim what Thou dost expect from Thy servants and Thy friends!

God having made known His wishes to the person whom there is reason to believe is according to His own heart, on account of the great graces which He has bestowed upon her, she related it to me, and I caused her to commit to writing what she had told me. I have gladly written it myself, in the journal of my retreats, because it is God's will to use my weak endeavours for the execution of this plan.

" Being," says this holy soul, "before the Blessed Sacrament one day during the octave of Corpus Christi, I received through God's love immense graces. Touched with the desire to make some return and to render love for love, He said to me: 'You cannot render Me a greater service than by doing what I have so often asked of you;' and showing me His sacred Heart: 'See this Heart which has loved men so dearly that it has spared nothing, even going so far as to exhaust and consume itself to testify to them its love; and the acknowledgment which I receive from most of them is nothing but ingratitude, contempt, irreverence, sacrilege, and coldness to Me in this Sacrament of love. What is still more discouraging is, that it is hearts consecrated to Me that treat Me thus. Therefore I ask you that the first Friday after the octave of the Blessed Sacrament should be dedicated to a special feast in honour of My Heart, making reparation to its honour, with holy communion on that day in order to repair the indignities which it has received during the time of exposition upon the altars; and I promise you that My Heart will expand to shower down abundantly the influence of its divine love upon those who shall render to it this honour.'

" 'But, Lord, to whom art Thou speaking? To a mean creature and poor sinner, whose unworthiness is even capable of hindering the fulfilment of Thy design? Thou hast so many generous souls to carry out Thy plan.' 'Do you not know, poor innocent that you are, that I use the weakest instruments to confound the strong? That it is usually in the insignificant and the poor in spirit that I display my power most signally, in order that they may attribute nothing to themselves.' 'Give me then,' said I, 'the means to perform what Thou commandest.' Then He replied: 'Apply to My servant N., and tell him from Me to do his utmost to establish this devotion, and afford this pleasure to My divine Heart; let him not be discouraged by the difficulties which he will meet with, as he will not fail to do; but he must know that that man is all-powerful who distrusts himself entirely to confide solely in Me.' "

In this retreat, which I conclude to-day, the lights which God has been pleased to give me have been shorter, but also, by His mercy, clearer than formerly. The feeling which I have generally had, has been a desire to abandon and forget myself entirely, according to the advice which was given to me on God's part, as I believe, by the person whom He has used to grant me many favours. I sometimes caught a glimpse of what this perfect forgetfulness of self consisted in, and of the state of a soul which has no longer any reserve with God. This condition, which has so long alarmed me, begins to please me, and I hope to try to attain to it by the grace of God. I sometimes discover in myself sentiments opposed to this entire abandonment and this caused me much shame.

When I am quite myself I feel by the infinite mercy of God a freedom of heart which causes me unspeakable joy. I think that nothing can render me miserable. I feel attached to nothing, at least for the time; but this does not prevent me from feeling each day the movements of almost all the passions; still, a moment of reflection calms them.

I often experienced great inward joy at the thought that I was in God's service. I felt that this was worth more than all the favour of kings. The occupations of worldly people appeared to me most despicable in comparison with what is done for God.

I find myself elevated above all the kings of the earth by the honour which I possess of belonging to God. I feel that it is worth more to know and love Him than to reign, and although I have occasionally thoughts of ambition and vainglory, it is certain that all the glory in the world, without the knowledge and love of God, would not tempt me. I feel great compassion for all those who are not satisfied with God, though they may possess whatever they desire beside Him.

I have discovered, and continue to discover daily, fresh delusions in zeal, and I felt an earnest desire to purify thoroughly that with which God inspires me, and which I feel is daily increasing.

I had also feelings of deep shame about my past life, a most firm and clear persuasion of how little we contribute to the conversion of souls, and a distinct view of my nothingness.

I perceived the necessity there is of walking with much circumspection, and with great humility and self-distrust in the direction of souls, and in one's own spiritual life; of detaching oneself entirely from the excessive desire which one naturally has to make great progress, arising from a feeling of self-love. This produces great delusions, and may entangle us in much that is imprudent. The love of humility, of lowliness, and of a hidden and obscure life, is an efficacious remedy for all these evils. We insensibly, and most absurdly compare ourselves with the greatest saints, and perform from the most imperfect motives, what they did by the movement of the Holy Ghost. We wish that to take place in a day, in ourselves and in others, which cost them many years; we have not their prudence, nor their experience, nor their talents, nor their supernatural gifts; in short, they were saints, and we are very far from being so, yet we are presumptuous enough to imagine that we can do all that they did.

There is no peace except in perfect forgetfulness of self; we must make up our mind to forget even our spiritual interests in order to seek simply the glory of God.

I feel an increasing desire to observe my Rules carefully, and find great pleasure in practising them. The more exact I become, the more I seem to enter into perfect liberty. It certainly does not impede me; on the contrary, this yoke seems to make me, as it were, move more lightly. I regard this as the greatest grace which I ever received in my life.

I am indescribably wretched in one thing: my imagination is foolish and extravagant. My heart is assailed by all the passions, and hardly a day passes without their agitating it one after the other, with all their most unruly movements. Sometimes it is real objects which excite them, sometimes it is imaginary ones. It is true that by

God's mercy I endure all this without contributing much to it, and without consenting thereto; but every moment I come upon these wild passions which agitate this poor heart. This self-love flits from corner to corner, and has always some retreat; I pity myself very much, but I do not become angry nor impatient, for what good would that do? I ask God to show me what I ought to do for His service and to purify myself; but I have resolved to wait quietly until it shall please Him to do so, for I am deeply convinced that this belongs to Him alone. *Quis potest facere mundum de immundo conceptum semine, nisi tu qui solus es?* "Who can make him clean who is conceived unclean, but Thou, my God?" Provided that I can go to God in great simplicity and confidence, I am only too happy. My God, may I ever feel this.

I have an earnest desire to do right, and I know the means to use. Provided I act carefully I shall seldom fail, but this is a great grace from God which I most humbly ask of Him.

The following words never occur to my mind without light, peace, liberty, sweetness, and love entering it together with them: *Simplicity, Trust, Humility, Complete Abandonment, No Reserve, the Will of God, my Rules.*

I have no greater joy than to discover in myself some new infirmity which had hitherto concealed itself from me. I have several times experienced that pleasure in this retreat, and I shall do so whenever it shall please God to communicate to me His light in the reflections which I make upon myself.

I firmly believe and have much pleasure in believing that God leads those who commit themselves to His guidance, and watches over them in little things.

I feel daily greater devotion to Saint Francis of Sales; I ask our Lord to grant me grace to remember this saint frequently in order to invoke him and imitate him.

OFFERING TO THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS CHRIST.

This offering is made in order to honour that Divine Heart, the seat of all virtues, the source of all blessings, and the refuge of all holy souls.

The principal virtues which we intend to honour in Him are: First, a most ardent love for God His Father, joined to a most profound respect, and the greatest possible humility. Secondly, infinite patience under trials, deep sorrow and contrition for sins the burden of which He had taken upon Himself, the trust of a most affectionate Son, together with the shame of a grievous sinner. Thirdly, tender compassion for our misery, immense love in spite of these miseries and notwithstanding all these movements, each of which was carried to the highest possible point, unchangeable equanimity, produced by such perfect conformity to the will of God, that no event could disturb it, however contrary it might seem to His zeal, His humility, and even His love, and to all His other dispositions.

This Heart is still, as far as can be, in the same dispositions, and, above all, ever burning with love for men, ever open to shower down every kind of graces and blessings, ever touched with our sorrows, ever animated with the desire to impart to us its treasures, and to give itself to us, ever ready to receive us and afford us shelter, home and paradise even in this life.

Notwithstanding all this, He only meets in men's hearts with hardness, neglect, contempt, and ingratitude. He loves and is not loved in return, and men do not even recognize His love, because they will not submit to receive the gifts by which He wishes to show it, nor to listen to the tender and secret declarations which He wishes to make of it to our hearts.

OFFERING.

In reparation for so many outrages and for such cruel ingratitude, most adorable and amiable Heart of Jesus, and to avoid as far as I can such a misfortune, I offer to Thee my heart, with all its movements, I give myself entirely to Thee, and henceforth I protest most sincerely that I desire to forget myself and all that relates to me, in order to remove any obstacle which might impede an entrance into this Divine Heart, which Thou hast the goodness to open to me, and into which I hope to enter, to live and die there with Thy most faithful servants, penetrated and inflamed with Thy love. I offer to this Heart all the merit and all the satisfaction of all the Masses, prayers, acts of mortification, religious practices, acts of zeal, of humility, of obedience, and of all the other virtues which I shall practise until the last moment of my life. I do so not only to honour the Heart of Jesus and its admirable dispositions, but I also humbly beg Him to accept the entire oblation which I make to Him, to dispose of it in the manner which shall please Him, and in favour of whom He pleases; and as I have already ceded to the holy souls in purgatory whatever there is in my actions calculated to satisfy the divine justice, I wish that this may be distributed to them according to the good pleasure of the Heart of Jesus.

This will not prevent me fulfilling the obligations which I have to say Masses, and to pray for certain intentions which obedience prescribes, nor from saying Masses for charity for poor persons, or for my brethren and friends who may ask for them; but as upon these occasions I shall use something which does not belong to me, I purpose, as is only just, that the obedience, charity, and other virtues which I then practise shall all belong to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, which has enabled me to exercise these virtues, which consequently belong to it unreservedly.

Sacred Heart of Jesus, teach me perfect forgetfulness of self, since that is the only way by which I can enter into Thee. Since all that I do will henceforth be Thine, enable me to act so as to do nothing unworthy of Thee. Teach me what I must do to attain to the purity of Thy love, which

Thou hast inspired me to desire. I feel a strong desire to please Thee, and a still stronger sense of my inability to do so without special light and help, which I can only expect from Thee. Lord, may Thy will be done in me. I resist this, I know, but I wish not to resist it. It is for Thee to do all, Divine Heart of Jesus. Thou alone wilt have all the glory of my sanctification if I become holy. This appears to me as clear as the daylight; but it will be to Thy great glory, and it is for that alone that I desire perfection. Amen.

THOUGHTS DURING PRAYER.

BY THE

Rev. FATHER PAUL SEGNERI,

OF THE SOCIETY OF JESUS.

Father Paul Segneri was sometimes called "the Elder," to distinguish him from his nephew and namesake, who was also a Jesuit Father and a distinguished preacher. He was born at Nettuno, on the sea coast near Rome, on the 22nd March, 1624, and he entered the Society of Jesus on the 2nd December, 1637. He died at Rome on the 9th December, 1694. Father Paul Segneri was as remarkable for the sanctity of his life as he was for his success in preaching. He was employed for many years as preacher and missioner, and very few persons have ever exercised greater power over vast multitudes of men by the practice of the ministry of the Word than he did. At the same time he was not less diligent as a writer, and his numerous spiritual works have been translated into many languages. His "Thoughts during Prayer" was published at Florence in 1831 by Leonard Ciardetti, as the thirteenth volume of his collected works, and as a separate work it was published in the same year at Turin by Marietti. From the last-named edition this translation has been made. An excellent English translation, now long out of print, was published in 1876 with a Preface by the Rev. Father Gallwey, S.J.

THOUGHTS DURING PRAYER.

PREFACE.

DURING the autumn vacation of the year 1660 I went into retreat to go through the usual course of the Spiritual Exercises, and it seemed that God was waiting for me then to rouse me from my lukewarmness, and languor in His holy service, which were not in accordance with my religious vocation. He deigned to enlighten my mind, to unveil to me the secrets of the most hidden truths, and chiefly, He gave me to understand the importance of eternity. From motives of fear my soul quickly passed to love, so that I felt myself inflamed with the ardent desire to sacrifice myself entirely to my Lord. I seemed inwardly to hear a voice saying to me: "It is My will that we should love one another." It needed no more to make me different from what I was before. I thought no longer of myself nor of the world, because my sole aim was to correspond to the invitations which came to me from my God.

From the verses of David I chose for the subject of my consideration that in the seventy-sixth Psalm: *Ego dixi: nunc coepi: haec mutatio dex-*

terae Excelsi:[1] "And I said, Now have I begun: this is the change of the right hand of the Most High." I therefore set to work to make a serious and complete change in my way of living, and by the clear light which came to me from God, suited to my state, these five things presented themselves to me: *poverty*, *retirement*, *prayer*, *penance*, and *examination of conscience*. From among these I chose prayer for my favourite occupation, not limiting the time for it, and besides the hour spent in meditation in the morning, according to the rule of our Institute, I devoted to prayer the remainder of the day when free from my occupations. Thus I reached the 11th of December, and on the morning of that day, when engaged in this holy exercise, God in His mercy began to communicate to me these lights, which I shall note down in these pages for my remembrance and profit.

I. My meditation this morning was spent in a kind of extraordinary sweetness, not with abundant tears, but with such gentleness and interior quiet that seemed to me still better, and which I can only express in the words of David: *Cor meum et caro mea exultaverunt in Deum vivum*:[2] "My heart and my flesh have rejoiced in the living God." That *vivum* gave me great pleasure. It is the having a God within one, not dead, like the stupid divinities of old, but seeing, operating, in short alive. I was inwardly moved almost to smile, if I may be allowed to say so, at the goodness of our Lord, Who allows Himself to be so easily deceived by men. My God, help me to express this thought as I learned it from Thee!

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[1] Psalm lxxvi. 11.

[2] *Ibid.* lxxxiii. 3.

Thou knowest well that although during the time of prayer I make many brave resolutions to do great things in Thy service, to give Thee all, to suffer all, to please Thee in all things; nevertheless, that I shall very soon betray Thee, and that perhaps before this day is over I shall break my word to Thee. Thou, knowing this well, comest to me as if Thou wert ignorant of it, and Thou dost caress me in prayer not in accordance with what Thou well knowest that I shall be, but as in that moment of fervour I tell Thee I wish to be. When did I ever act thus towards any one? If any one were now to make me a thousand promises, and I knew that though he did so sincerely, he would afterwards fail to keep them, would turn traitor to me, and would join my enemies in offending me, such promises would not make me at all inclined to caress him, but I should rather despise and detest him. Thou, my God, dost act so differently towards me! Yet, together with the infallible knowledge of the future, Thou hast also the clear experience of the past. Thou knowest how often I have made Thee similar promises, and afterwards betrayed Thee; yet Thou lookest only at what I am, and not at what I shall be. Is not this almost to allow Thyself to be deceived through excessive kindness? How well didst Thou say by Jeremias: *Vocavi amicos meos, et ipsi* *deceperunt me:*[1] "I called for my friends, but they deceived me." I have called these men my friends, I have treated them as such and given them presents, and they have deceived me foully. My God, do not allow me to deceive Thee again in this manner. Give me constancy, give me fidelity: rather to die a thousand times than to offend Thee with my eyes open, even slightly. Yes, I will do so with Thy grace, my Benefactor.

All this may be applied to the resolution which we make in Sacramental Confession: in which appears another refinement of divine goodness, namely, that God is willing to ascribe the satisfaction to us as merit, and to reward us for what we give to Him in justice as payment. How wonderful that God should reward me because I am sorry for having offended Him, or because I do penance! Am I not strictly bound to do this and much more? We certainly do not act towards our debtors when they make satisfaction to us as God does towards us.[2]

II. I have lately been much troubled with this temptation, namely, that when in prayer, or at some other time, I wished to offer myself to God as ready to suffer any great thing for the love of Him, and even ask it of Him, it appeared to me that this alone would be an unbearable mortification, awkwardly to lose the thread of my discourse in some sermon. Here my nature was perplexed because, on the one side, I knew that I was bound promptly to accept everything from the divine hand; whilst, on the other side, I feared that this same resignation would have the effect of causing God to try me in this way. Hence arose a great fear which interfered with my power of speech in preaching, and almost caused me to hesitate. I told it to my spiritual father as a temptation, and according to his advice have endeavoured to disregard it, because God wills that I should continue my work as well as I am able.

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[1] Lamentations i. 19.

[2] It is doubtful whether this paragraph, which is printed in italics in the first edition at Florence, is by Segneri, or was added by the editor.

This morning the same temptation returned: therefore, with divine grace, I have conquered myself and endeavoured to convert this fear into desire. I have urgently asked God to give me this public mortification this very morning, on which I am to preach an important sermon in this town. But, in truth, this cannot be to my prejudice, for it is no longer fear but desire; and in this lay the delusion, for fear weakens bold spirits, not so desire. Still, I ought to use all possible diligence to know my subject matter and to deliver it as well as I can, because then, if I forget myself, I shall be certain that it comes from God, and I shall rest satisfied, where without such diligence it would have been my fault. This is one of the principal reasons why St. Ignatius tells us that we should use all diligence as if we had not God to help us. With this generous act I seem to have conquered, and nothing has since presented itself to my mind which I do not appear ready to suffer for the love of God, by the help of His grace. *Laus Deo:* "Praise be to God."

III. It seems to me that we ought to desire the food which we receive from God in prayer to be like that given to Elias to ascend Mount Horeb, that is, food of great fortitude. We ought not to care whether it be sweet and savoury, or like bread made of ashes and little pleasant to the palate. Therefore it is not said of Elias, that *ambulavit in suavitate cibi illius*, but *in fortitudine cibi illius*:[1] "He walked in the strength," not in the sweetness, "of that food."

I made this consideration this morning, as for the last two days my prayer has been more dry, and my heart not in its usual state of joyfulness and satisfaction: nevertheless the hour passed away very quickly, and through God's mercy I had many tears, but they all proceeded from the sorrow I felt at perceiving myself to be so bad, and from considering myself like a wretched fledgling amongst the rubbish and dirt of the nest, that wishes to soar straight up to God; but I feel that I have no wings. How lovingly have I often repeated these words: *Quis dabit mihi pennas sicut columbae et volabo, et requiescam?*[2] "Who will give me wings like a dove, and I will fly and be at rest?" Thou, my God, if it be Thy pleasure; Thou wilt give them to me, because Thou must do all, and it will be well if I let Thee work without hindering Thee, so little able of myself am I to do anything.

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[1] 3 Kings xix. 8.

[2] Psalm liv. 7.

IV. I perceived this morning that one of the chief reasons why God withdraws from the soul in the manner mentioned above, is to make it careful to see whether there is something in it displeasing to Him, and thus to refine and purify it more. I have experienced this in myself for the last three days, during which I seem to have been in the state in which David said: *Fuerunt mihi lachrymae meae panes die ac nocte, dum dicitur mihi quotidie, ubi est Deus tuus*:[1] "My tears have been my bread day and night, whilst it is said to me daily: Where is thy God?" Therefore I passed on to what follows: *Haec recordatus sum, et effudi in me animam meam*:[2] "These things I remembered, and poured out my soul in me;" for I poured out my whole soul before my eyes, keeping nothing hidden, in order to see if there was anything past or present for which God was angry with me; because, though I discourse with God in prayer as before, He does not seem to treat me in the same way. I hope that in the end I shall be able to add: *Transibo in locum tabernaculi admirabilis usque ad domum Dei*:[3] "For I shall go over into the place of the wonderful tabernacle, even to the house of God." Only I run this risk, that my anxiety to see whether there be in me anything displeasing to God may produce scruples; since I seem for the last few days to be more in trouble about my usual shortcomings.

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[1] Psalm xli. 4. [2] *Ibid.* 5. [3] *Ibid.*

V. *Miserere mei Deus, secundum magnam misericordiam tuum:*[1] "Have mercy on me, O God, according to Thy great mercy." There are various degrees in God's mercy towards sinners like David. The first is, notwithstanding the insults which He receives from them, to give them in this life easy circumstances, riches, honours, prosperity. He acts thus chiefly towards those who will be lost. Nevertheless it is mercy, because He might let them be damned sooner, instead of allowing them to enjoy themselves thus for some years. The second degree of mercy is when He punishes a sinner in this world instead of in the next, and therefore afflicts him grievously here, and treats him severely. But the third degree of mercy, and the greatest of all, seems to me to be, when God proceeds thus with a sinner, though the sinner does not wish it, but complains, bewails, and calls God cruel. I consider, therefore, in the state in which I am, of mortification which penetrates to my very soul, how many complaints I have made against Thee, O God, during these last few days. What things I have said! What tears I have shed! How often have I almost accused Thee of cruelty, in not deigning to hear me, whilst Thou didst all the time withdraw from me all consolation! How great is Thy mercy towards me in not heeding my complaints, but in continuing to treat me, notwithstanding, as was for my good! It is indeed a great thing. Thou comest to me with this mortification to save me from eternal punishment, to prepare me for everlasting glory; and I complain as if it were a grievous wrong. What wouldst Thou say to me under such circumstances if Thou shouldst treat me as I deserve? Thou wouldst say to me. . . . But the greatness of Thy mercy will not allow it, and therefore Thou dost regard me as sick and delirious; Thou dost pity me and dost lay Thy hand still more heavily upon me. How great is my confusion! In seeing myself correspond to Thee with such ingratitude, and telling Thee that Thou art cruel: *mutatus es mihi in crudelem*:[1] "Thou art changed to be cruel toward me," whilst Thou art treating me so compassionately. Continue, then, to treat me as long as I live according to the abundance of Thy mercy. Heed not what I say: let unmortified nature resent it, for she is stupid. Act not according to my demerit, but *secundum magnam misericordiam tuam*: "in accordance with Thy great mercy."

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[1] Psalm l. 1.

VI. O my Jesus Christ, how shall I ever be able to render fit thanks to Thee for the tender mercy which Thou hast deigned to show me this morning? For a long time I have been so plunged in the consideration of my sins and wickedness that I could not raise my eyes from them, and seeing myself every day weaker concerning evil, was almost falling into despair. But at last Thou hast condescended to make me understand that all this suffering arose from my not having considered sufficiently what great gifts we have included in Thyself. For what reason didst Thou come into the world, if not that we might use Thee as we would? *Nobis datus, nobis natus ex intacta virgine*:[1] "Of a pure and spotless virgin, born for us on earth below." Thou art kindness itself, and Thou hast again and again protested that Thou willest not the death of the sinner, but his salvation. How great has been my folly in remaining so timid, so diffident, instead of trusting myself to the depths of Thy love!

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[1] Job xxx. 21.

Thou art an advocate of infinite wisdom, and hast the keenest desire to defend my cause: why then do I not take advantage of a defence so efficacious? Thou art a physician of infinite skill, and hast an earnest wish to heal my disease: why then do I not make use of such a master hand? Thou art a captain of infinite power, and Thou dost desire to defeat my enemies and liberate me: why then do I not have recourse to Thee and place myself under the protection of so strong an arm? What prevents me from freely using Thee if Thou art mine, and for me? I have offended Thee, it is true, I have despised Thee, I have been long without valuing Thee, I have abandoned Thee: revenge Thyself for this. Here is my heart: wound it through and through, but with the arrows of

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[1] Eccl. in Hymn. Fest. Corp. Chr.

Thy divine love, that, despite itself, it may wish Thee the good which is Thy due. Thy love can take no other revenge, for this is not the time for justice, but for mercy. Do what Thou wilt, I trust in Thee. If only I had this perfect trust, it alone would make me holy. This gave holiness to so many who now possess it, and it is because we wretched creatures have it not that we accomplish so little for Thy honour. Give it to me, my Lord, I seek no more.

Thou art so amiable, so sweet, so gentle, and I have treated Thee as if Thou wert most cruel. Come to take vengeance! Cause my heart, mortally wounded with love, to awake and to confess with great ardour and sweetness that I have erred grievously. Thou art mine; I shall indeed be foolish if I do not use One Who wishes so much to serve me in all things. *Festinemus ergo ingredi in illam requiem*:[1] "Let us hasten, therefore, to enter into that rest," as the fervent apostle says, exhorting me to hasten to enter that blessed rest which Thou hast in Thy mercy prepared for me in paradise, if I, wretched creature, with my demerits, do not render myself too unworthy of it.

But what can I do to hasten to obtain so great a good? Can I fix the limit of my own life? Can my own hand open the door of this prison? Can I break the chains or loose the fetters which bind me? Lord, Thou knowest well that this is not permitted, but we must all wait until it shall please Thee to summon us to this great happiness. We may indeed pray that it may come quickly; but we cannot hasten it. I therefore think that to perform many good works is to make Thee hasten it; and in this way to make satisfaction as far as possible for the innumerable sins by us committed; for no doubt we shall have to remain in purgatory so much shorter a time, and that consequently we shall enter so much more quickly into Thy eternal rest.

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[1] Heb. iv. 11.

Yes, my Jesus, be pleased to grant that I may in this manner hasten, that I may speedily behold Thy sweet face. This will be my rest, this my joy, this my longed-for happiness. But what would it be if I, when dead, were obliged to wait many, many years before attaining to the sight of Thee? No, Lord, rather make me suffer by intensity in purgatory what would spread over a longer time, in order that the suffering may be shorter. Provided that they end quickly, may all those pains come upon me simultaneously, because to me the greatest of them all will certainly be the delay in seeing Thee.

VII. Having entered into prayer with the intention of asking our Lord for the gift of wisdom, which is a right understanding of divine things, and wishing for this end to consider the divine greatness, and to set foot in paradise, I felt unusual eagerness, yet I seemed to be like a bat which would fix its eyes on the sun, and as if I was driven thence by all the saints and cast into hell, the place which

I have deserved for my sins. Therefore my first view of it produced abundant tears, which continued for the whole hour of prayer, in the consideration of such a punishment, with various acts of compunction, humiliation, and invocation.

If, for instance, a girl of noble family residing in France were to be betrothed to an Italian gentleman living in Italy, she would certainly make inquiries from those of her relations who returned from Italy concerning him. If they all agreed in affirming that in the whole of Italy there was no knight to compare to him; that he was handsome, amiable, well-disposed, and without the least defect; that his manner won the heart, his speech charmed the mind, and that he possessed other gifts in a high degree; if the bride should hear this from the first who returned to France from Italy, and if she should hear it repeated again and again by others in still stronger terms, how eagerly she would wish for him to send for her speedily! How she would look for his messengers and wait for his galleys! How eagerly she would ask herself, When shall I see him?

Dearest Jesus! Thou art in heaven, and from heaven Thou hast deigned to wed this poor soul of mine dwelling upon earth. I have the earnest of these sweet espousals, my Benefactor, in that Thou hast given me Holy Baptism and the religious vocation. From those whom I can ask about Thee I hear things beyond the imagination of such as have not seen them. They tell me that a hundred suns united would not equal the brightness of

Thy face. St. Teresa, who only saw Thy hands, tells me that she was wrapped in ecstasy for several days at the sight. Those who have heard Thee speak inform me that Thou canst bind every heart by the sound of Thy voice. Those who have seen Thee rejoice tell me that a smile of Thine is enough to give calm to every soul. They tell me, moreover, that Thou inhabitest a palace more stately than those which are seen amongst mortals; that the streets are paved with gold, as here with mud. They say that Thou hast a Father of such lofty grandeur as to be omnipotent, that at a sign from Him the abysses tremble; they tell me that Thou hast a Mother whom to see once one would willingly choose to be blind henceforth; that Thou hast about Thee a court of ministers, pages, and cavaliers without number, but that each of them is greater than any earthly king. They tell me so much, O Lord, of Thy beauty, Thy excellence, and Thy unheard-of grandeur, that I cannot remain far from Thee. Be pleased now to show me the beauty of Thy face! *Ostende faciem tuum, et salvi erimus*:[1] "Show Thy face and we shall be saved." I understand now why Catherine of Siena, Magdalene de' Pazzi, Gertrude, Teresa, and Thy numerous other loving virgins could live no longer on earth; since they knew themselves to be Thy spouses and were aware of Thy rare beauty. Since it is Thy will that I should continue to live, help me at least to profit by the time to adorn myself befittingly that I may be quite ready when Thou shalt send Thy messengers to me, and bid me come to Thee.

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[1] Psalm lxxix. 20.

Who would ever believe that the bride mentioned above, hearing such praises of her absent lord, and being so eager to see him, would not hold her jewels and trousseau prepared, so as to set out at the earliest notice? When the galleys were in the port would she be obliged to tell them to wait while she made her preparations? She would have already dismissed all, disentangled herself from all long since, and at the sight of the galleys would at once exclaim: Let us go. How would it be, Spouse of my soul, if at the close of my life, when Thy messengers come to warn me that it is time to set out, I have to ask for time to prepare? If I have to say: *Inducias usque mane, inducias usque mane:* "Delay till to-morrow, delay till to-morrow," to ask for time for repentance, to say that I am not ready, that I have my preparations to make? O Jesus, do not allow this to happen, for the love with which Thou lovest this poor soul which is no longer mine but Thine, since Thou hast espoused it. Cause me to take all pains in preparing myself now as I ought, in arranging the dowry and getting ready the bridal clothing to go forth to meet Thee, in taking leave of and separating myself from all, not retaining any kind of attachment. This will be my comfort in this sad absence, to be able to appear before Thee somewhat better adorned, since Thou wilt have given me so long a time to do so. This is the thought which

Thou hast deigned to give me this morning upon the words: *Ostende mihi faciem tuam, et salvi erimus:* "Show me Thy face and we shall be saved." Blessed be Thou. But I cannot write it down here as Thou didst give it to me.

VIII. This morning I wished to consider before God whether, if a prominent charge were ever offered to me, it would be consistent with perfection to refuse it, or if the inward repugnance to it which I now feel may proceed from secret self-love, and I had clear light to see what follows. First, it appears to me certain that if, as I have formerly done, I wished to neglect my spiritual concerns, prayer, reading, and recollection, and to become engrossed in study, I should not have experienced great difficulty in accepting a similar charge on account of the toil which it involved, and indeed I should rather have aspired to it. What renders it now contrary to my wishes is the knowledge that by reason of it I should run a great risk of falling into such negligence that I should have much anxiety, be subject to great distractions, and with difficulty (considering the imperfection and shallowness of my spirit) be able to maintain the small amount of devotion which our Lord is now pleased to communicate to me. My only feeling, therefore, was that if such a charge were to come to me, I ought to trust that God would help me, and so accept it. Nevertheless, I judged that I ought first to refuse it, in so far as the limits of perfect obedience allowed; because in so far as in me lies I ought to fly from the occasion, and ought not to expect special assistance from God in what I can avoid by ordinary means. Then if it should be imposed upon me by obedience, I ought to accept it bravely, with deep trust in God, because then I can oblige Him even to work miracles. I ought therefore first to refuse, which cannot be any scandal (which is another point that requires care), because the charge being an important one, it would be edifying for me to refuse. I have therefore resolved to act thus in God's name, if such an occasion should arise, and I have had great clearness of knowledge in this, combined with tenderness and an unusual amount of tears.

IX. *Si quis putat se religiosum esse,* says St. James, *non refrenans linguam suam, sed seducens cor suum, hujus vana est religio:*[1] "If any man think himself to be religious, not bridling his tongue, but deceiving his own heart, this man's religion is vain." What is that *seducens cor suam,* which is set in opposition to *non refrenans linguam suum?* Is there any incompatibility between bridling the tongue and deceiving the heart? No, indeed; they are closely united, because good persons, of which it here speaks, and especially religious, are not usually too free with the tongue without having first deceived the heart. To deceive is to incite to evil by falsely stating that a thing is good, or not bad. Thus religious deceive the heart first by persuading themselves that to speak somewhat freely upon a certain occasion is not to act wrongly but is harmless recreation, that some biting word is no great sin. Thus they seek various specious motives wherewith to disguise their failing. That which is the case with the tongue, that, I consider to my confusion, I do in many of my operations, in eating, in looking: first, I deceive my heart; then it is no wonder that, acting with too great freedom, I may deceive myself, but I cannot God.

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[1] St. James i. 26.

X. The Blessed Sacrament is called *Pignus futurae gloriae:* "The pledge of future glory." Therefore it is worth more than glory, since no one gives in pledge anything of less value than that of which it is the pledge.

My God, wouldst Thou do me a service? Show me why others have suffered tribulations and not I, who have neither the credit nor reputation, nor so much to lose. Formerly, by Thy inscrutable decrees, which we must humbly revere rather than discuss, Thou didst send the Society some trial, persecution or calumny, in the person of one of its members, so that by reason of one all should not suffer, and thus all turn against him. Good Lord, *Ecce ego, mitte me:*[1] "Lo, here am I, send me." Let me be the one chosen to suffer on such an occasion, and spare the others who have worthily won this habit, not like myself, who have profaned it by the relaxation of my life and the freedom of my conduct. Formerly Thy providence ordained that a traveller should fall into the hands of robbers and be shut up in a forest, or that in crossing the sea he should become a prey to the Turks, and be condemned to slavery. *Ecce ego, mitte me.* Lord, may I be that servant whom Thou shalt use thus. Thou knowest that I have often, before making the daily offering, entreated Thee to do this, in order that in the hard life of a slave I might perform the penance which I cannot bring myself to do willingly; therefore, having asked it from Thee, this misfortune would not fall so heavily upon me as upon another whom it might find unprepared. How happy I should be to find myself with irons on my feet, barefooted, filthy, half-naked, serving a hard master, who beat me cruelly every day, giving me scarcely food enough to support life, and no bed upon which to rest! I should then pay for the many luxuries with which I have pampered and caressed my body.

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[1] Isaias vi. 8.

At another time, in order that men might not wickedly murmur at Thy just providence, as they are much inclined to do, some one had to bear the blame of some untoward accident, or some public calamity which befell. This happened to Thy servant Bernard, when he had so ardently excited the Christian countries to that Crusade which ended so unhappily. The people excused Thee then, laying the blame upon him, as if for Thy sake he had rashly persuaded them to do what Thou didst not then approve. Here am I. I offer myself in such a case to receive the blows which would wound Thee. *Bonum mihi, si me digneris uti pro* *clypeo:* "Good for me if Thou shouldst deign to use me as a shield." I will say to Thee, as he did: *Libens excipiam in me detrahentium linguas maledicas et venenata spicula blasphemorum, ut non perveniant ad te: non recuso inglorius fieri, ut non irruatur in Dei gloriam:* "Willingly do I take on myself the sharp tongues of detractors and the poisoned shafts of blasphemers, that they may not come to Thee. I do not refuse to lose all glory, that God's glory may not be attacked."

In short, I offer myself to Thee to be Thy meanest and most contemptible servant. Use me as Thou wilt in the calamities which Thou dost send upon the world, in mortality, in pestilence. Preserving him who promotes Thy glory better, kill me, who do nothing but offend Thee, though I have so often promised to reverence Thee. This is the agreement Thou shouldst make with me, if Thou art pleased to render me worthy of so great a thing. Thus, whatever disaster befalls me, however painful, severe, or shameful it may be, I will remember that Thou art using me according to the offering which I made Thee; and in this thought I shall find tranquillity and consolation, and even joy, by the help of Thy grace, without which I can do nothing. So be it, O my God. Accept this offering, with the hearty simplicity with which I endeavour to present it to Thee.

XI. This morning our Lord, in order to remove from me all anxiety, caused me to meet with a chapter in a book entitled *The Path of Perfection,* by St. Teresa, in which I found minutely described the manner of prayer which He has until now communicated to me by His grace; so that I can scarcely doubt that it is conformable to His holy will, and my spiritual father has also told me so. It is chapter xxviii., in which is described the prayer of recollection. Indeed it appears to me that I have several times experienced the tranquillity, if not of all the three powers simultaneously (which, however, for a considerable length of time I seem to have felt to be fixed upon God in a deep union of love), at least of the will, which remains fixed in His presence, enjoying Him, and longing to be transformed into Him only. The thought fades, but only slightly, returning speedily and unsought. Blessed be our Lord for such a favour! Thus the hour passed by with extraordinary rapidity. Only from the chapter just mentioned I have taken a notable improvement. I used to represent God to myself as outside me, but in this I perceive that I have erred, and that I should look at Him as within me, where He really is, according to the words of the apostle: *Vos estis Templum Dei vivi*:[1] "For you are the temple of the living God;" and thus, without going out of myself, I shall remain much more recollected. Therefore, the following day being the Third Sunday in Advent, I determined to make my morning prayer upon those words of the gospel for the day: *Medium vestrum stetit quem vos nescitis*:[2] "There hath stood One in the midst of you Whom you know not"; and by God's grace I profited greatly. So my mind is now calm, and in future I shall not take note of anything except, as I used to do, of those lights which may be profitable to others in sermons and exhortations, and these will be few, because I discuss very little in prayer, although I always begin by discussion, and always pass on to affections. Those lights which heretofore I have written down were communicated to me by God in His mercy without my meditating upon them, since I endeavour to make my prayer with the greatest possible simplicity, because I know that: *Cum simplicibus sermocinatio ejus*:[1] "His communication is with the simple." What is *sermocinatio,* but speaking very familiarly, in an ordinary manner? And this I desire from God, leaving it to Him to communicate Himself more profoundly to intellects worthier than mine, and to those older in His service, and to raise them to the dignity of lofty contemplation.

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[1] 2 Cor. vi. 16.

[2] St. John i. 26.

XII. When princes have pardoned a rebel, they do not immediately restore him to Court, nor receive him in audience, nor deal directly with him. So David, when he had forgiven his son Absalom, sent the patent of pardon thus: *Revertatur in domum suam, et faciem meam non videat*:[2] "Let him return into his house, and let him not see my face;" and he allowed two years to elapse before speaking to him. I have been lost in admiration at the mercy of God Who deals with the sinner in a directly opposite manner. For when He has restored him to grace He at once treats him familiarly, bestows upon him the great gift of prayer, allows him to see His face, and to know His secrets. Thus He did with St. Ignatius and with other saints, who immediately when converted attained to a sublime contemplation. Hence has arisen within me the hope that my past sins will not deprive me of this great good, and I have returned thanks for that small degree which God has hitherto caused me to experience, particularly this morning, thanks to the special recourse which I had for that end to the Blessed Virgin.

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[1] Prov. iii. 32.

[2] 2 Kings xlv. 24.

XIII. *Ne erigas oculos tuos ad opes, quas non potes habere, quia facient sibi pennas quasi aquilae et volabunt in coelum*:[1] "Lift not up thy eyes to riches which thou canst not have, because they shall make themselves wings like those of an eagle, and shall fly towards heaven." It appeared to me that this which Solomon said concerning temporal riches also applies to spiritual ones. For there are many persons who fix their eyes upon something which though holy, it is not in their power to attain; and desirous of it, and sighing after it, live in disquiet and discontent, neglecting to perfect themselves in their own state. I have therefore endeavoured to understand from God what the spiritual riches are which my soul may long for at the present time with well-founded hope to obtain them: whether they be labours in the Indies, sufferings in the missions, or the abundant fruit which others gather from dealing with their neighbours, and it seemed to me very clear that it was not so, but that all my efforts should be directed to the study of prayer; for it appeared to me that under present circumstances this is certainly what God would have from me. I have therefore lovingly thanked Him for having deigned singularly to choose me to the high honour of holding familiar intercourse with Him, though I have done nothing to merit it. If this should be called the best part, according to the words: *Maria optimam partem elegit, quae non auferetur ab ea:*[1] "Mary hath chosen the best part, which shall not be taken away from her," I have in a manner excused myself with our Lord, for having, vile worm that I am, rested in this, since it is not I who have chosen it, but He Who has chosen me for it. What greater cowardice than for me to refuse it? The Blessed Virgin did not do so, who though she reputed herself most unworthy to be chosen for the dignity of Mother of God, did not therefore excuse herself, but when she knew that her promise of virginity would remain untouched, said immediately: *Ecce ancilla Domini fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum:*[2] "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me according to Thy word."

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[1] Prov. xxiii. 5.

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[1] St. Luke x. 42.

[2] St. Luke i. 38.

XIV. I have received this light in prayer, that God is a great almsgiver. Since He so strongly enjoins almsgiving upon men, much more must He practise it Himself, Who is so rich, and of so kind and liberal a nature. There is then nothing better than presenting oneself before Him as a poor person: for, in order to obtain alms, it is not necessary for a poor man to possess any right or merit in himself, it is enough for him to be poor: and indeed the poorer he is, the greater is his claim to obtain what he needs. Thus, my misery should not make me distrustful of obtaining from God what I request, but should increase my confidence. We should remember one thing, namely, that God is usually pleased to bestow His alms secretly, in accordance with the instructions which He has given to men. What wonder, then, if many who have asked spiritual gifts from God do not seem to obtain them? Yet it is not so. I see that we obtain each time what we ask: for God is a great, but secret almsgiver. We cannot give alms to the poor without His knowing of it, though we can do so in a manner which is hidden from others. But God can do so in such a way that even we who receive it are not aware of it. This is the greatest of all secrecy.

XV. *Charitas operit multitudinem peccatorum*:[1] "For charity covereth a multitude of sins." This is true, since God, on account of the charity which we practice towards our neighbour, accepts as good many actions defective enough in themselves. But alas, it is sometimes true in another sense, for we use charity as a pretext to cover numerous sins, and then, only too surely, *Charitas operit multitudinem peccatorum.* This happens, when under pretext of charity a person becomes careless about various small sins, and slothfully wastes time in unnecessary recreations. Thus, as frequently happens when I am passing by the colleges, and am ordered to spend a few days in them, I am often led into this on the pretence of charity, which conceals the waste of time. If I shall have to render an account to God for every idle word however trifling, how much more for whole days idly wasted for the empty consolation of conversing with my friends, when this is not done for the sake of the spiritual profit which we may mutually derive from it?

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[1] St. Peter iv. 8.

XVI. *Haec est voluntas Dei, sanctificatio vestra:*[1] "For this is the will of God, your sanctification." This then is the reason, O my God, why I should endeavour to become holy, in order to afford Thee this pleasure. For it is certain that we cannot please any one more than by fulfilling his will, especially when it is certainly his, as this is certainly Thine. I ought therefore to seek to become holy, in order to please Thee, not to receive pleasure from Thee, even in spiritual matters: not in order to receive illuminations, sweetness, tears, consolations, but solely in order to please Thee. O love of my soul, what thing more sublime than this could ever be imagined? That one of Thy creatures should arise to such a condition as not to aim at deriving pleasure from Thee, but at giving it to Thee; is not this almost to wish to make oneself Thy superior? Since if, according to that great saying of Thine, *Beatius est magis dare quam accipere*:[1] "It is a more blessed thing to give rather than to receive," the giving has the superiority, the receiving is an action of inferiority; the creature who desires to give Thee pleasure makes itself, as it were, greater than Thee. Yet, Lord, Thy goodness has condescended even to this. This Thou desirest from us, this Thou seekest, that we should treat Thee thus. Who ever saw such a thing? Who ever heard anything like it? That I, a wretched worm, I, vile dust of the earth, should say to Thee that my sole aim is to give Thee pleasure! In this very act Thou dost delight, and I thus become more pleasing to Thee.

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[1] 1 Thess. iv. 3.

XVII. This morning our Lord communicated to me a strong affection for penance: not to make it so much in satisfaction, as in revenge for my sins. I should not aim at satisfying by it for those temporal penalties which on their account I must pay in this life or the next, and which I should even wish for, that justice may be done: but simply that I may revenge the many insults I have offered to God. To pamper this flesh I have been so disloyal to God, so irreverent, and I must revenge this. I must revenge myself upon this palate, these eyes, all these senses of mine, mortifying them, punishing my whole self. Have I not been very hurtful to myself, hindering those many graces which God would, in His goodness, have communicated to me? Why then should I forgive myself? I am my own greatest enemy: *Qui diligit iniquitatem odit animam suam*:[1] "He that loveth iniquity hateth his own soul." I have no greater enemy. No one has done me more harm, or brought more grievous calamities upon me: let me treat myself as what I am. Though I should not revenge so much what I have done against myself, as those offences which I have dared to commit against God. I would hasten the vengeance which God defers taking upon a traitor such as I am, who have behaved so shamefully to Him, for I see not why it should delay. My God, Thou dost pardon me this anger, for it is perfectly just. Are my ingratitude towards Thee, my numerous affronts, my ribaldry, to remain unpunished? Who amongst men would pass them over? It is a small thing that Thou shouldst entirely forgive the guilt, and this I entreat Thee to do, that I may not be for ever a victim, deprived of love; but why shouldst Thou also forgive the penalty?

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[1] Acts xx. 35.

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[1] Psalm x. 6.

XVIII. I have considered concerning the good thief, with what steps he proceeded in his conversion, and that to him who corresponds with the first graces God does not fail to furnish greater. The first thing he did was to admonish his companion: *Neque tu times Deum, qui in eadem damnatione es?*[1] "Neither dost thou fear God, seeing thou art under the same condemnation?" Which was as much as to say: Even if this man were what those down there suppose him to be who are cursing him, it is not for thee to curse him, who art likewise a malefactor. This was a correction which any honest man might have uttered. Then he went further and added: But he is not a malefactor as we are: *Nos quidem juste, nam digna factis recipimus: hic autem quid mali gessit?*[2] "And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done no evil." In this, he became ashamed of himself, he humbled himself, and he acknowledged Christ to be a holy man: moved by beholding the patience with which He allowed Himself to be ill-treated, and the charity with which He had prayed for His persecutors. This act required much greater grace than the former; but greater still was needed for the third act, to which he quickly rose, confessing Christ to be very God. *Domine, memento mei cum veneris in regnum tuum:*[3] "Lord, remember me when Thou shalt come into Thy kingdom," and he obtained this grace, because he had corresponded one by one with those, whether small or great, which he had received. Thus it is that a faithful correspondence with God is necessary according to the measure of grace which He gives us from time to time. *Exhortamur vos, ne in vacuum gratiam Dei recipiatis:*[1] "We helping do exhort you, that you receive not the grace of God in vain." I also perceived from this, how God remunerates the least act done from zeal for His honour and for the salvation of others, such as that performed by the thief, and which, as I said before, any honest man might have done.

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[1] St. Luke xxiii. 40. [2] St. Luke xxiii. 41. [3] *Ibid.* 42.

XIX. It is commonly said that no money should be more exquisitely paid than a pension or charge on a benefice. It should be punctually disbursed when due, and the payment of it should precede all others. It must not be made in any sort of money but in good coin of full weight. They will not receive it in Rome except in gold with their own stamp, and the reason of it all is that it is a pension, and he who desires the benefice should of his own accord be satisfied with all this. The recitation of the Divine Office is called a tax: *Pensum persolvet,* and it is a tax in return for a great benefit, which is specially enjoyed by Priests in Holy Mass. It is not then surprising that it ought to be paid with great exactness.

When any one confides to me some feeling, some displeasure of inward vexation, I am moved to love him on account of the confidence and esteem which he has shown me in opening his heart to me; but if I afterwards find that he has been reposing his confidence in others, and publishing to every one what he told me in great secrecy, I value his act no longer, but am angry with him because he seems to have been trifling with me. It is the same with God. He highly appreciates my confiding to Him, as to a very dear friend, all my troubles and vexations: *Tribulationem meam ante ipsum pronuncio*:[1] "Before Him I declare my trouble;" but if I afterwards display them to others, complaining and laying open my heart, God can no longer value mine as a special act of friendship towards Him. Therefore I will be satisfied with having God alone as witness of my troubles, neither will I seek for human consolation by disclosing them to any one.

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[1] 2 Cor. vi. 1.

XX. *Tu autem in sanctis habitas, Deus Israel*:[2] "Thou dwellest in the holy place, O God of Israel." Christ alleges this as a reason for being reinstalled after death in a glorious life, as appears from the explanation of this Psalm. One of the lights which I have received concerning these words is this. Christ might have, for this end, suggested many other attributes of the Father, each of which would have been equally convincing: nevertheless He adduces His holiness, since He knew that in this alone His Father delighted. In proof of this the Seraphim in heaven only sing to please Him, *Sanc-*

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[1] Psalm cxli. 3.

[2] Psalm xxi. 4.

tus, Sanctus, Sanctus, Dominus Deus:[1] "Holy, holy, holy, the Lord God of hosts," not mentioning His omnipotence, immensity, nor wisdom. I receive this from God as a severe reproof: because, having found deep meaning in these words, but without that sweetness of consolation to which God has in His mercy accustomed my taste, I complained: when suddenly, without any previous discussion, He infused the consideration mentioned above, reproaching me with this, that we men set a greater value upon being comforted by God (in which holiness does not consist) than upon being holy, which is the same as doing His holy will. But, as God, in whatever way He speaks to the soul, even when He rebukes it, always causes pleasure; thus He gave me back the longed-for consolation, which I afterwards experienced in the words, *laus Israel,* considering that He glories in this, that men should serve Him: *Servus meus es tu, Israel, in te gloriabor:* "Thou art My servant, O Israel, in thee will I glory."[2] If God glories in having me for His servant, how can I possibly be ashamed of being so, or refrain through human respect from openly professing myself as such? *Servus tuus sum ego, Domine: in te glorificabo, et in te solo:* "I am Thy servant, O Lord; in Thee will I glory, and in Thee alone."

XXI. *Osculetur me osculo oris sui:*[3] "Let Him kiss me with the kiss of His mouth." One morning, after Holy Mass, I seemed to be able to say these words confidently to God in the sense which I will here try to express. It is wonderful to think that almost all the saints, amongst the remarkable acts which they were accustomed to perform, have included that of kissing some leper, and God has been pleased thereby, inasmuch as He has frequently given them grace to restore the leper to health by that kiss. Thus did St. Eleazar, St. Francis of Assisi, St. Francis Xavier, St. Martin, St. Catherine of Siena, and many others. A clear light came to me by which I knew my soul to be thoroughly leprous, and therefore I took courage to ask God to perform for my soul that act of tender charity which He has so highly approved in His servants. And in this sense I added those words: *Osculetur me osculo oris sui*:[1] it seeming to me certain that if I had been worthy of this kiss, I should at once have recovered health, and my soul would have become beautiful. I thought that God could not deny me this, since, although the leprosy of my soul was most filthy and more loathsome than any other, that would not hinder Him, because though it would indeed be a heroic act to kiss me, it should not seem strange to Him to surpass what had been done by His servants, who kissed lepers less fetid than myself. Hence it seemed to me, that if God had done me this favour, I could afterwards, with His help, have endeavoured, on some secret opportunity, to have performed that other act for His love.

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[1] Isaias vi. 3. [2] Isaias xlix. 3. [3] Cant. i. 1.

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[1] Cant. i. 1.

XXII. There are two ways of clearing wild, overgrown land. One is to take an axe and to cut down tree after tree. The other is to set fire to it. The second way is beyond all comparison the easiest and also the best, because the ground thus burnt becomes more fertile. *Saepe etiam steriles incendere profuit agros*:[1] "It has often profited to burn the sterile fields." It is the same with the soul. We may proceed by the means of various virtues, pulling up vice after vice; but this is a lengthy business, with great toil and less fruit. The true way is, set the heart on fire with strong love to God, and this will speedily accomplish what would otherwise have required great labour, and moreover it not only cleanses the heart, but fertilises it wonderfully. I therefore had a great desire that God would cast this fire from heaven into my heart, since I know not how to kindle it myself.

XXIII. *Panem nostrum supersubstantialem da nobis hodie*:[2] "Give us this day our supersubstantial bread." It has seemed to me that by this bread may fitly be understood that heavenly consolation which is received from God in prayer, through His word, His instructions, and through tears. It is called *bread* because it is universal food, loved by every soul, without which the spirit becomes weak, and as it were lean, and with which it gains incredible vigour to walk as Elias did, through deserts, to the summit of Horeb, that is, perfection. It is called *our*, because it is prepared for us, and is for our comfort more than for the divine glory; since it is to be partaken of secretly, unknown to others, and is to be received in our private chamber, where it will distil sweet tears. It is called *supersubstantial*, because as ordinary bread is the food of the inferior substance, that is, the body, so this is the food of the superior substance, the soul: also because it not only affords comfort, but gives great strength to overcome difficulties and conquer temptations. We say *give us* imperatively, and not *grant us*, because God likes His servants to ask Him for things very trustfully as if He were bound to bestow them. If this is always true, it is so especially in the case of the consolation of which we are now treating, which seems to be the sustenance proper to this present life for those who serve God faithfully. As St. Bernard says is the case with husbandmen, who not only receive pay when the harvest is ended, but are also supplied with food whilst reaping it, that they may work with greater alacrity; as these labourers confidently ask their masters for this bread, so do we towards God. Lastly we say *this day*, because it must be daily food, as bread is; but we do not say *now*, because with God suitable latitude should always be left for Him to work in all things; neither should we endeavour to compel Him to operate instantly without great necessity, because this is to ask for marvels.

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[1] Virgil, *Georg.*, i. 83.

[2] St. Matt. vi. 11.

Upon this I greatly wondered how my soul could have lived without this bread so many months and even years, for I, wretched sinner, am only too conscious of having spent whole years without prayer, and I considered that it is for this reason that my soul had become so weak and languid for good, that if it is not dead, as I cannot positively affirm, it has often been in danger of dying. *Percussus sum ut foenum, et aruit cor meum, quia oblitus sum comedere panem meum*:[1] "I am smitten as grass, and my heart is withered: because I forgot to eat my bread." Meanwhile it has been sustained, and it has happened to me as to others, of whom we read that they lived for some time upon the odour of bread, though they did not eat of it. Thus, I, having occasion when I preached, frequently to handle the Scriptures, to read devotional books, and to develop holy thoughts, have gone on sustaining myself with the odour of bread, and have miserably let my life drag on up to this time, although without food, *ad majorem Dei gloriam*.

XXIV. *Castigo corpus meum, et in servitutem redigo: ne forte, cum aliis praedicaverim, ipse reprobus efficiar*:[2] "But I chastise my body, and bring it into subjection: lest perhaps, when I have preached to others, I myself should become a cast-away." It seems to me that these words should put us greatly to confusion, who, esteeming ourselves highly necessary to the world for our talents and our preaching, abstain from chastising our body as we ought, under the pretext of preserving ourselves for what is to the greater glory of God. Those are not wanting who flatter us daily, and tell us to be careful and prudent. O holy apostle, I should have said: If we ought to do what these exhort us to, why dost thou chastise thyself so severely? Canst thou not see how necessary thy preaching is to the world? Preserve thyself for the many nations who may yet receive from thee the light of the Gospel: preserve thyself for the fatigue of journeys and voyages. To what end dost thou heap up fasts, vigils, flagellations? Are not those discomforts enough? Surely thou knowest that such penances greatly hasten death; and if thou shouldst die, who will remain upon earth who can like thyself spread the glory of God? I should wish to have spoken thus; but it would have been useless, for the apostle already knew this well; he was aware of his worth, his talents, and the great fruit which was produced by his preaching, as he had written to the Corinthians: *Nos autem Spiritum, qui ex Deo est, accepimus, ut sciamus quae a Deo donata sunt nobis*:[1] "Now we have received not the spirit of this world, but the Spirit that is of God: that we may know the things that are given us from God." Yet he refrained not from performing severe penance, esteeming himself more bound to hinder his own damnation than to seek the salvation of others. From these words may be inferred what should be the measure of penance, and how far it may be carried; namely, until the body is subject to the spirit, and behaves like the servant that it is. As war is not concluded until the rebels are completely subdued, and submit to their prince; so penance should not be abandoned whilst rebellion remains in the senses. Who is so holy as not to experience this rebellion in great measure until death?

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[1] Psalm ci. 5.

[2] 1 Cor. ix. 27.

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[1] 1 Cor. ii. 12.

XXV. *Quoniam sagittae tuae infixae sunt mihi, et confirmasti super me manum tuam*:[1] "For Thy arrows are fastened in me, and Thy hand hath been strong upon me." It seems to me that God has given me to understand the real meaning of these words, which, if I mistake not, is as follows: When a hunter wishes to overtake some wild animal, such as a deer or wild goat, what does he do? He shoots several arrows at it, some of which at last fasten in its side and cause it to slacken speed or to stop; then the hunter comes up with it and lays hands upon it and stops it. I think that in this verse of the third Penitential Psalm, the holy prophet has used this similitude, because he, having been a fugitive from God, God, by the arrows of various afflictions, previously intimated to him by Nathan, and then aimed at him, checked his flight until He laid His holy hands upon him. *Confirmavit super eum manum suam*: "He strengthened His hand upon him," and gained him for Himself. God does this every day with many sinners, and it seems to me that He has acted thus towards me, by striking me in my ears, and rendering me unfit to converse, to treat with people, or to pursue many vain things which I was following to my hurt. He has checked me in such a course, and has thus laid His hands upon me by giving me a great desire to render myself up completely to Him, and to abandon vanity, that I may adhere to verity. I have, therefore, prayed that He *confirmet super me manum suam:* "should strengthen His hand upon me," so that I may never escape from Him, and I have asked Him not to extract His arrows from my ears, if they are to make me stand firm. Hence I have considered that such arrows of tribulation should be *infixae*, that is, deeply fixed, otherwise they will speedily fall out and not produce the effect. Thus we see that sinners are not suddenly moved when they feel that they are struck with adversity, but only when it has endured for a season. It has been so with me.

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[1] Psalm xxxvii. 2.

XXVI. *Omnem escam abominata est anima eorum, et appropinquaverunt usque ad portas mortis:*[1] "Their soul abhorred all manner of meat: and they drew near even to the gates of death." By *omnem escam* is meant the manna, which was equivalent to all kinds of food on account of the variety of taste. By manna I wish now to understand prayer, with which the properties of manna wonderfully agree, as I have elsewhere considered.[1] Manna greatly pleased or greatly displeased, for it was spoken of with the highest praise or the strongest blame. When it pleased, the Hebrews said wonderingly: *Man-hu . . . quid est hoc?*[2] "What is this?" When it displeased, they said, with strong disgust: *Anima nostra jam nauseat super cibo isto levissimo:*[3] "Our soul now loatheth this very light food." There was never a moderate opinion given of it, nor a moderate relish shown. So it is with prayer; for experience has made me perceive that it either greatly delights or deeply disgusts. Therefore few will make it unless they find in it much relish, and those who do not, soon neglect it and wonder how others can find it. Hence I excused myself with God for asking Him so frequently to give me great relish and not to allow me to lose the fulness of His sweet consolations. For I resolve and hope to persevere in prayer with equal application of mind and of will in time of desolation; but I distrust myself, and take warning by the example set me by the Israelites, when, on account of their sins, the manna no longer furnished them with such variety of exquisite savour.

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[1] Psalm cvi. 18.

XXVII. I received to-day a lively impulse to value my soul most highly, not because it is mine, but because it belongs more to Christ than to me, since He bought it with His most precious blood, according to that *an nescitis, quoniam non estis vestri? empti enim estis pretio magno*:[1] "Know you not that you are not your own? For you are bought with a great price." From this I have drawn a great confidence to ask God great things for my soul's welfare, that He would enrich it with many gifts, fill it with many graces, and cause me to meet with some trustworthy guide for its direction in the spiritual life. I have an earnest desire for such a guide, but I do not find one, owing to the unsettled life which I lead, now in one college, now in another. In short, it appeared to me that there was no favour granted by God to others which I may not boldly ask Him to bestow upon me, whilst I ask, not for me, as I am in myself—for as such I desire not that He should even look at me—but for me as belonging to Him, as something greatly valued by Him, and bought with as high a price as any one of the saints who reign in heaven. Hence I was moved to care for myself with much solicitude, not for the body, since it was not the body that Christ bought with His precious blood, but the soul, guarding it as something not my own, and of which I am bound in common courtesy to take greater care; just as if a prince were to deposit with me a precious crystal that belonged to him, I should be much more careful not to break it than if it were my own. Generally, when we urge worldlings to value their soul highly we bring forward the reason that it is theirs, and we do well to say so. But as for me, at present the knowledge that it is not mine moves me more to set a great value on my soul: *An nescitis, quoniam non estis vestri?* " Know you not that you are not your own?"

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[1] In the *Manna of the Soul.*

[2] Exodus xvi. 15.

[3] Numbers xxi. 5.

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[1] 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20.

XXVIII. *Simile est regnum coelorum thesauro abscondito in agro*:[1] " The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field." By this hidden treasure, it seems to me, may be best understood evangelical poverty, not only because it comprises all the riches it desires, since it has divine providence for perpetual purveyor for its needs, not only because it is hidden, for there are few even in religion who thoroughly appreciate its great value, but because to no other evangelical virtue does that literally apply which is written of this treasure, namely, that he who has found it *vadit et vendit universa quae habet:* " goeth and selleth all that he hath," in order to acquire it. The acquisition of no other virtue requires a man to spend all his riches. Not evangelical chastity, for a person may be most chaste and nevertheless retain all his possessions. Not evangelical obedience, for a man may be most obedient and yet retain all he possesses. Not evangelical humility, for it is possible to be most humble and yet to retain what he has. And the same may be said of all the other virtues. Not so with evangelical poverty, for this it is impossible to acquire whilst retaining anything of one's own, since it consists in leaving all: *Reliquimus omnia et secuti sumus te:* "We have left all things and have followed Thee."

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[1] St. Matt. xiii. 44

XXIX. In my prayer this morning, in accordance with the subject, I asked God most earnestly for some vivid light to comprehend that a person can really arrive at wishing to be despised, at loving it, and rejoicing in it. For that a man may endure it patiently like other human vexations I can understand; but that he can attain to delighting in it seems something inconceivable. After I had in vain attempted to fathom this, God was pleased to supply this light. He who possesses some little knowledge of spiritual things easily arrives at understanding this truth, that the things which aid him greatly in detaching the heart from immoderate love of his fellow-men are an inestimable treasure: because the farther we remove from and separate ourselves from creatures and from their love, the more closely we come to be united with God, to possess His love, and to be one with Him. This is certain. Now, if you notice, nothing detaches the heart from men so much as contempt: not only because when we are esteemed it is easy to love those who esteem us excessively, and for their sake to be led into something disordinate, making ourselves their servants and subjects contrary to what St. Paul says: *Sed ego sub nullius redigar potestate:*[1] "I will not be brought under the power of any;'" but also because to possess great credit and high esteem in the world obtains for us many friends, according to the proverb: *Multi colunt personam potentis*:[1] "Many honour the person of him that is mighty." Even those who perhaps inwardly envy us outwardly show us great respect, and offer us service. Hence our heart becomes ensnared by them, *et sub illorum redigamur potestate*. So the disgrace, which frequently comes upon us and which causes people gradually to withdraw from us, sets us at liberty. If in addition we fall into great contempt, then they all forsake us, and thus we are of necessity obliged to turn to God, or at least do so more easily. This is the reason why contempt can be so much loved: because it leads us to God by the shortest path, and, by detaching the heart from men, puts us more easily in possession of God, Who wishes to be loved not only above all, but alone, and Who desires to have our whole heart. Hence I have come to know the hidden treasure which He has given me in my deafness: inasmuch as it naturally brings with it contempt, and in the community in which I live men have one great motive the less for respecting me, esteeming me, and showing me honour, because, being deaf, it is clearly seen that I cannot be promoted to any important office in Religion, and thus no one has anything to hope for or fear from me, which naturally conciliates the regard of many persons. Therefore, abandoned by men, it remains for me to give myself completely to God: *Pater meus, et mater mea dereliquerunt me, Dominus autem assumpsit me*:[1] "For my father and my mother have left me: but the Lord hath taken me up." Whereupon I went still further, to esteem it a happy destiny that in future no one should speak well of me or do me any service, or give me any present; in short, that if possible all should forget me, because *ego sub nullius redigar potestate:* that in this manner my heart may be more detached from the love of men, from obligations to men, and thus remain free for God alone. The heart is narrow, and the more that is given to men, although without sin, the less remains for God. Moreover, to pay the debts which I owe to men I must bring myself to do many things not entirely conformable to perfection. Liberty, then, liberty. This is the great lot in life, and in this the apostle had resolved to maintain himself in those words: *Omnia mihi licent, sed ego sub nullius redigar potestate*:[2] "All things are lawful to me, but I will not be brought under the power of any." As if he had said: All things are lawful to me which are lawful to others; thus I also might have a stipend for preaching, I might accept alms, or receive gifts, as others do: but I will be a servant to no one, not through pride, like some worldly people, but through greater liberty of spirit, to be able to serve God more independently.

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[1] Cor. vi. 12.

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[1] Proverbs xix. 6.

XXX. I seem this morning to have realized specially this truth in prayer, that whatever I possess which is not human, is all given me by God, and that whatever I have from myself takes me from Him: so that, to enjoy God completely, I must deprive myself of whatever is not God. It is one thing to read this truth, as I have sometimes done, and another thing to experience it; for I have found by practical experience, that, applying my thoughts to something of which I have deprived myself for God's sake, I at once feel myself drawn to unite myself entirely with Him; whilst, when I turn my thoughts to something which I still retain, the heart seems quickly to withdraw into itself, and separates itself from Him. This is so true that even the natural satisfactions, which I do not seek for during the day, but which come to me of themselves through the intercourse which I am constrained to have, though contrary to my will, through civility, or convenience, or the frailties of our human nature, these same satisfactions, I say, considered by me in prayer, leave me dry and do not give me God, Who rather withdraws from me on account of it; as if I had already received what is to sustain and invigorate me, so that He will not give me more. But oh, how different to support oneself by feeding upon hay or upon manna! It should therefore be my daily endeavour to despoil and dispossess myself of all that is not God, and thus not only to withdraw myself from the power of men (as I considered on a former occasion), but from the power of every other creature, from all my affections, from all my passions, until I arrive at the total suppression of self which St. Paul meant in those words: *Vivo ego, jam non ego, vivit vero in me Christus*:[1] "I live, now not I: but Christ liveth in me." In living no longer to myself, that is, in having no longer any living act of wishing or not wishing, of rejoicing or being saddened by anything concerning me or mine, then our Lord will live in me. In one case only have I experienced that human advantages and even satisfactions lead me to God, that is, when they are considered as received from Him, and therefore inflame my heart with love to Him. Nevertheless, it leads more to Him, to consider what we have not and to be content, than to consider that we have and to thank Him for it. Hence we ought rather to ask God to take away, than to bestow, anything that is not Himself; since, when all else is wanting, He gives Himself to us even without our asking: *Inventus sum a non quaerentibus me*:[2] "They have found Me that sought Me not." When we possess other things, we are obliged to seek Him in order to enjoy Him together with them, and we often weary ourselves to find Him.

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[1] Psalm xxvi. 10.

[2] 1 Cor. vi. 12.

XXXI. Upon asking God this morning to be pleased to bestow upon me many of His holy gifts in prayer, as He grants to His true servants, I seemed to receive the inward answer from Him that He does not give them to me, because I, being so induced to vanity, should be liable to grow proud thereat. But I replied, that the more of such gifts He bestowed upon me, the better I should comprehend His grandeur, and know my own vileness, the more I should look up to Him and despise myself, so that there would be less risk of growing proud. By this answer I seem, as it were, to have lovingly convinced God, and so remained much consoled, and encouraged to trust that I shall obtain what I desire, and already this reply is itself the pledge of it. Since, what doubt is there that He Himself suggested it to me? Just as a master suggests a difficulty to his young pupil, and together with it supplies the solution.

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[1] Gall. ii. 20.

[2] Isaias lxv. 1.

XXXII. Upon the occasion of considering in chapter xii. of St. Matthew, our Lord's defence of His disciples when bitterly calumniated by the Pharisees because on the Sabbath when passing through the corn they plucked the ears to eat, two points, out of many others, seemed especially profitable. The first is, that I ought to leave the care of me to God when I am censured or accused, because if it is expedient, He will speak for me better than I can. The other is, to observe how God has undertaken my defence upon many occasions, in my corporal and spiritual perils, and thence I have roused myself by gratitude, to take up God's cause against those who would offend Him, as He takes up my cause against those who would injure me. This seems to me a good reason to stir me up to have zeal for souls, and for the conversion of sinners, therefore I note it down here. *Qui tetigerit vos, tangit pupillam oculi mei*:[1] "For he that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of My eye," says God to His servants. Who then can describe what great zeal He has for each of us, defending us with drawn sword against enemies visible and invisible? Such should be our zeal towards God against His enemies of every kind, bad Christians, heretics, heathen, Jews, against great and small. *Ponam zelum meum in te*:[1] "I will place My zeal in thee" is the sweet promise God gives me, by Ezechiel. *Et zelus domus tuae comedit me*:[2] "For the zeal of Thy house hath eaten me up:" this is the answer that I ought to give to God.

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[1] Zach. ii. 8.

XXXIII. Having found the following beautiful thought in the Life of Father Alvarez, that in order to obtain from God the gift of prayer and loving union with Him, we need to say to Him as Sichem did to the brothers of Dina: *Quaecumque statueritis dabo, augete dotem, et munera postulate, et libenter tribuam quod petieritis: tantum date mihi puellam hanc uxorem*:[3] "Raise the dowry, and ask gifts, and I will gladly give what you shall demand, only give me this damsel to wife." I who now desire this above all else, set myself to beseech God in these words, offering Him everything if He would grant me this. Then, considering what particular thing God might require from me, I represented to myself that in these matters it happens with us as it did with Sichem. Every other thing he imagined might be asked except what was required of him. He expected to be asked for money, jewels, possessions, and such like things: none of these were demanded, but only that he should be circumcised. So it is with us. We think that God expects from us something great, or splendid, whilst He desires something quite different, perhaps some painful blow. This is the most sure way to espouse ourselves with prayer: to cut off disordinate affections, to suffer, and to mortify oneself: without this, whatever other dowry we offer is useless, yet we place this last, and forget it. Let us at least follow the example of Sichem, who was not discouraged at the proposal, though unexpected, but generously acceded to it.

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[1] Ezech. xxiii. 25. [2] Psalm lxviii. 10. [3] Gen. xxxiv. 12.

XXXIV. *In te speraverunt patres nostri, speraverunt, liberasti eos*:[1] "In Thee have our fathers hoped; they have hoped and Thou hast delivered them." This repetition is not devoid of mystery, because in order to obtain God's assistance it does not suffice to begin to hope in God, but we must persevere, though it should at first seem that to have hoped in Him has been of no avail. We find a striking instance of this in the twentieth chapter of Judges, when the whole people of Israel, *tamquam vir unus*: "as one man," took up arms against the tribe of Benjamin on account of the atrocity committed by it. The people undertook that war for a most just cause and took counsel of God, Who Himself appointed their captain, and encouraged them to the battle: nevertheless, they were completely beaten. The people continue to hope in God, have recourse to His aid, and God encourages them to fight again, upon which they suffer a defeat no less disastrous than the former. The good people hope a third time, and commend themselves again to God: finally they gain such a signal victory, that they almost annihilated that tribe. In this I saw a lively image of what occurs within us in the battles which we undertake with our passions. To attain to holiness we must hope in God and fight courageously. The cause is just, the spirit is bold, and we fight with much fervour: yet we are defeated. O God! How is this? Dost Thou afford us so little of Thy help? Yet Thou didst in so many ways urge us to the combat. Why then dost Thou not quickly give us that victorious grace with which we should succeed in totally defeating our enemies? No, no, let us hope and fight, and then leave it to God. If we are the losers, then patience. He permits this to arouse our confidence and that we may know our own weakness by experience. A victory, such as God may afterwards give us, can terminate any war. The main thing is, that we should never lay down our arms on account of any untoward accident, but continue fighting even when losers. In this consideration, which has been made not so much by myself in my mind, as I feel it has been sweetly placed by God in my heart, I have received a most consoling light: which is this, that I should not be disquieted at seeing my passions still lively, and at feeling myself opposed by them. What God wants from me is only that I should fight. It belongs to Him alone to give the signal victory by which all enemies would be crushed. *Deo autem gratias*, says St. Paul, *qui dedit nobis victoriam per Dominum nostrum Jesum Christum*:[1] "Thanks be to God, Who hath given us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." The combat he ascribes to himself: *Bonum certamen certavi*: "I have fought a good fight," the victory to God alone. Therefore, in the things which I have to do with God, I ought to be very diligent: as to those which depend on God alone, I ought to pray to Him, hope in Him, and then commit myself entirely to Him. To this latter kind belongs the blessing of the complete subjugation of the passions, so that I should no longer feel repugnance nor resistance in obeying, mortifying myself, nor humbling myself. This is a general defeat, to obtain which I can co-operate by fighting manfully, but it is God alone Who gives it. In like manner what must I do in prayer, strengthened by divine grace? I must be careful to resist distractions, and keep my mind fixed, and my understanding alert: whether I shall be free from distractions, receive great consolation, or shed abundant tears God alone can do. I shall be satisfied with what He is pleased to give. This, which is exemplified this morning, holds good in every other case. I should in all things distinguish clearly what I have to do with God, and what God has to do alone.

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[1] Psalm xxi. 5.

[1] Cor. xv. 57.

XXXV. God took occasion in my prayer this morning to give me to know the refinement of His love to me, concealed in my deafness. For, on the one hand, when I was in good health, I could employ myself more for souls, hearing confessions, treating with people, and giving missions: but, on the other hand, through the great weakness of spirit which experience has shown to be in me, I was so much myself the loser, because on account of these things I used greatly to neglect myself, prayer, and recollection. Now God has shown me, by the infirmity which He has sent me, that He does not care for the good which I might do to others, but that I should seriously attend to myself, that He values my soul more highly than all those which I might gain by conversing with them: which appears to me a singular refinement of love, which compels me to correspond with the tenderest affection towards God.

XXXVI. *Calicem quidem meum bibetis*:[1] "My chalice indeed you shall drink." It almost appears to me, if it is not rash to say so, that our Lord did not here speak appositely. For who drinks or ever has drunk the chalice of His Passion? We indeed drink of the chalice, but He alone has drunk it to the dregs: *Epotavit usque ad faeces*.[2] The bitterness of this chalice consists of two things: in enduring contempt and in suffering pain. Now, applying this to myself, I considered what part I have to drink of this chalice. First, as regards contempt: *Ego sum vermis, et non homo*:[1] "I am a worm and no man." So Christ speaks of Himself. I am not trodden under foot like a worm, or heedlessly injured by every one as a worm is. In order to be let alone, I need only be like other men, seek to know no more and to aspire to nothing higher than they do. *Opprobrium hominum*:[2] "The reproach of men:" this belongs to Christ. So much He does not require from me; but only that I should not presume to be *decus hominum*, the shining light of the community in which I live. *Novissimus virorum*:[3] "The most abject of men:" this likewise applies to Christ. From me He does not ask this, but only that I should not imagine myself *primus virorum*: the principal person in the work that I am doing. It is enough for Him that I be satisfied at seeing many preachers belonging to the Society who are above me, and possess more talent than I have, that I defer to them as such, that I speak of them with the same praise which they receive from others, being satisfied that they should be summoned to the most important pulpits, and thereby gain greater distinction. *Abjectio plebis*:[4] "The outcast of the people;" such was Christ. As for me, it is enough if I am contented to see the people flock in greater numbers to more popular preachers than myself. I suffer no greater contempt than this. *Omnes videntes me, deriserunt*

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[1] St. Matt. xx. 23.

[2] Ezech. xxiii. 34.

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[1] Psalm xxi. 7.
[2] *Ibid.*
[3] Isaias liii. 3.
[4] Psalm xxi. 17.

me:[1] "All they that saw Me have laughed Me to scorn:" this happened to Christ. If I am derided, I am not derided by all, or at most they can only all unite in not praising me, and even that is unlikely. It is enough for me not to aim at applause. (This consideration might be extended to other subjects, as in this matter of contempt, so also in that of suffering; but time did not permit me to do so.) Therefore Christ should have said: *De calice meo bibetis;* not *calicem meum bibetis*:[2] "From My chalice you shall drink," not "You shall drink My chalice." But He is so gracious that He wishes to acknowledge every slight act of homage as if it were very great, and thus He speaks in these terms. Upon this I was ashamed at seeing myself unwilling to drink a draught of that great chalice which our Lord has drunk to the very dregs for me. I have asked Him to forgive my baseness and ingratitude, and to embolden me to despise the esteem of men; I have considered, and by God's grace more thoroughly understood, that saying of St. Francis, that *a man is worth what he is in the sight of God, and no more.* It is enough to be valued by Him, therefore I will seek to hide myself from every one else. With regard to any kind of worth, to seem and not to be is vanity; to be and to seem is truth; to be and not to seem is holiness.

XXXVII. *Quis mihi det, ut inveniam te foris et deosculer te?*[3] "Who shall give Thee to me . . .

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[1] Psalm xxi. 17.

[2] St. Matt. xx. 23.

[3] Cant. viii. 1.

that I may find Thee without and kiss Thee?" These are the words of a soul deeply enamoured of its beloved. But what do they mean? I will note down in what sense God was pleased to make them useful to me in prayer. What a soul aims at in prayer is that embrace and close union with its most loving God, signified by the sweet name of kiss. But this is arrived at differently by different persons. Some, in order to find God in prayer, must penetrate into the hidden depths of some mystery in which He is, as it were, concealed; they must meditate, discuss, and consequently endure great fatigue, after which God discovers Himself to them by means of some word spoken to the heart, some ray shed upon the mind, which causes them to feel His divine presence within them, makes them shed tears, binds them to Him, and sweetly melts them. These truly arrive at finding God; but, as it were, within, and their audience is like that given by princes in their grandeur, after traversing many apartments. Others have scarcely knelt down to pray when they find God, as it were, at the door without; because, without long consideration, their mind at once rises to unite itself with Him: they have affections, tears, and their charming audience needs no effort. This is the favour granted to those whom God has raised to the height of contemplation, and this is what the soul asks of God in those words: *Quis mihi det, ut inveniam te foris et deosculer te?* It wishes to find its Beloved immediately, without waiting outside, and it needs not to labour to find Him, as he does who meditates. Fitly, therefore, it continues: *Et jam me nemo despiciat:*[1] "And now no man may despise me." Because he whom the prince waits for, and receives in audience in his apartments, has honour paid him, but how much more he whom the prince goes to meet, even to the outer door. There is no fear that one so highly favoured will not be respected by all: all wish to see him, to know him, to show him deference. Thus, in the heavenly court who can despise a soul which God goes to meet, when it comes to speak to Him? It is natural that all the saints and angels should vie with each other in seeking it out and doing it service. Blessed should I be if I could some time obtain this great gift, abandoning the many considerations which I have to use at the commencement of prayer, in order to find my God. *Quis mihi det, ut inveniam te foris, et deosculer te, et jam me nemo despiciat!* But it behoves me to acknowledge my vileness, and to repute it no small favour that God should in any manner grant me audience, and not have the door shut in my face by the angels who guard His chambers.

XXXVIII. *Ne discesseris a me, quoniam tribulatio proxima est, quia non est qui adjuvet:*[2] "Depart not from me, for tribulation is very near: for there is none to help me." By tribulation is here understood death, as Bellarmine explains.[3] Though these words were used by David in the person of

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[1] Cant. viii. 2. [2] Psalm xxi. 12. [3] Bellarm. in Psalm xxi.

Christ, I have applied them to myself with special fruit in my prayer this morning, considering first, that death is, as it were, a compendium of all tribulations, comprising the loss of friends, of honours, of possessions, grievous sufferings of body and mind, and lastly, the tribulation which the saints call the greatest of all, namely, the torment of an evil conscience, which will be heavier than ever in that hour. Secondly, I have considered that this tribulation *proxima est:* "is close at hand," because, as far as I can see, it must come quickly; and even if it should be delayed some years it may well be called *proxima*, on account of the speed with which these years fly away. I have seen many of my friends die in the prime of life. Thirdly, I have considered that in this tribulation *non est qui adjuvet:* "there is none to help me," unless God will help me, out of His infinite mercy. Foolish creature that I am, to have committed so many faults in order to serve those who will help me so little, and can help me so little in that hour, caring nothing how, for their sake, I displeased Him Who will alone be able to help me. I was deeply moved at the thought of my soul then abandoned by all, and myself alone at the feet of Christ, to render up my account. Even though my last disease should not be a loathsome one, how difficult will it be to induce any one to come near me! I trust that my friends will then pray for me; but they will soon forget me. When I am in the grave those who were saddened by my death will quickly talk and laugh as before. And am I to care more for others in this world than for God? By God's goodness this prayer has been very fruitful to me, therefore I will use it in future from time to time. Those three points supply me with the three best considerations upon death which could be made for a sermon. I have conceived the hope that in that hour God will help me, and I have embraced Him with various affections. He on His part *mandavit nubibus desuper, et januas coeli aperuit, et pluit mihi manna ad manducandum*:[1] "He hath commanded the clouds from above, and hath opened the doors of heaven, and rained down manna for me to eat."

XXXIX. In the old law God insisted that no sacrifice should be offered to Him without salt. *Quidquid obtuleris sacrificii, sale condies: nec auferes sal . . . de sacrificio tuo: in omni oblatione offeres sal*:[2] "Whatsoever sacrifice thou offerest thou shalt season it with salt, neither shalt thou take away the salt . . . from thy sacrifice. In all thy oblations thou shalt offer salt." The moral application made by the saints is, that every sacrifice of our bodies which we offer to God through penance should be made with discretion, which is the condiment for all things. But alas, by some it is too much salted, and the salt is of such a nature that neither much nor little of it is desirable. Both are equally disagreeable. To tell the truth, if we must go into one extreme it is better always to make the food insipid than to salt it too much. I mean that if we do not know how to use a just measure, it is better in the sacrifice of our bodies that there should be too little rather than too much salt. Look at the saints: they all did so. They who recommended discretion to others scarcely knew how to exercise it towards themselves.

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[1] Psalm lxxvii. 23, 24.

[2] Lev. ii. 13.

XL. We who have to work in the world see many bad examples calculated to turn away our heart from God. What shall I do that I may not care for applause when I see others value it so highly, and not seek better things, higher positions, more comforts, feeling that these are held in high reputation? I will apply to myself what God said to the Hebrews before they were taken prisoners to Babylon: *Nunc autem videbitis in Babylonia Deos aureos et argenteos et ligneos et lapideos in humeris portari. . . . Visa itaque turba de retro et ab ante adorante, dicite in cordibus vestris: Te oportet adorari, Domine*:[1] "Now, ye shall see in Babylon gods of gold, and of silver, and of stone, and of wood, borne upon shoulders. . . . But when ye see the multitude behind and before adoring them, say you in your hearts: Thou oughtest to be adored, O Lord." In the world I see some bow down before the idol of gluttony, others before the idol of honour, others before the idol of riches, or of ambition. What ought I to say amongst such a crowd? I ought at once to enter into my heart and say, with my mind fixed upon God: *Te oportet adorari, Domine.* Would to God that I had only to call this to mind in the world, and not also in religion, for I now hear a preacher highly praised, not because he gains much fruit, but because he is much run after. I hear another envied because though young he has been promoted to high offices; another admired because he has been employed by princes in important negotiations; or another who possesses many comforts, or because much money passes through his hands. No, my God! *Te oportet adorari.* It is very necessary upon these occasions to raise the mind at once to God in this manner, setting one's theories right, obeying the precepts, and attending to one's principles; and God will not fail to help us whilst we perform what He has taught us in His Holy Scriptures.

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[1] Baruch vi. 3 and 5.

XLI. *Nos stulti propter Christum, vos autem prudentes in Christo*:[1] "We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are wise in Christ." I do not know if I can explain these words as I understood them in prayer, and still feel them within me. Yet it is of the greatest importance, because it seems to me that they contain the pith and marrow of holiness. There is a great difference between being wise in Christ and being a fool for Christ. Both are good; but the Apostle was not satisfied with the former, and preferred the latter. There is a worldly wisdom which makes a man wicked, and there is a wisdom in Christ which does not prevent a man from being just: there is a foolishness for Christ which makes a man holy. I will explain this by examples, and setting aside worldly wisdom, which is well known, I will speak of wisdom in Christ, as contrasted with foolishness for Christ, as exemplified in the person of St. Francis Xavier, because it was upon his Feast that God gave me this thought. When St. Francis Xavier was about to leave the great work which he was performing in Italy, to go, though already past middle age, to a new world, across distant seas, and through numerous perils, without knowing any language by which he could make himself understood by these barbarous nations, it appears that prudence should have stepped in to dissuade him from so doing, and it would have been wisdom in Christ; because, whilst he was accomplishing so much, converting so many souls, sanctifying so many cities, why should he leave a certain, though inferior good, for one which, though greater, was more uncertain? The same might be said when he was in Portugal, where he did so much good that he was fitly called the apostle. From India he went to the island of the Moor amongst cannibals, poison, and treachery. Was this prudence? Was it not better to cultivate the freshly-planted Christianity in India? So again, when he went to Japan, and when he set off to China, it was assuredly a fool's decision; but he became holy thereby, because he undertook these things for Christ, and because it was great foolishness it made him a great saint. If he had remained in Rome he would have been a good labourer in our Lord's vineyard, and would have worked prudently in Christ, but I know not whether he would have become the saint that he was. This that I have said of him, and also his sucking the wounds, his indefatigable labour, regardless of his health, though it was of such good service to God, may be said of all the saints, amongst whom I know not one who did not commit some similar folly.

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[1] 1 Cor. iv. 10.

Now for my conclusion. I shall never accomplish much if I measure everything by the rules of singular prudence and exact circumspection. I shall be good; but I shall never be a saint. I have heard some say that they do not wish to strive after great perfection, because being aware of their weakness, and having experienced what has previously happened to them, namely, to turn back, they think it better to proceed at a more moderate but safer pace. This is indeed prudence, and I will even concede that it is in Christ; but it is not foolishness for Christ. Foolishness for Christ was that of St. Peter, when, seeing Christ upon the shore, he threw himself into the sea in order to reach Him more quickly. It was perilous, it is true, but Christ gave him His hand. The other apostles were prudent in Christ, choosing to go in the boat; but they had not the grace which Peter had. What shall we decide to do? Why so much examination? Why so much consideration? If we do not succeed, what shall we have done? Folly, yes; but folly committed for Christ. That is enough for us.

It avails not to quote in opposition those words of the Gospel: *Quis rex, iturus committere bellum adversus alium regem, non prius sedens computat si possit cum decem millibus occurrere ei qui cum viginti millibus venit ad se:*[1] "What king about to go to make war against another king, doth not first sit down and think whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that with twenty thousand cometh against him?" which words recommend this prudence which I now disapprove. It is no use to bring them forward, for they prove nothing against me. Are we the king, or the soldiers who have to carry on the war? The king does well to consider whether he has sufficient resources to keep up the war. It is not for the soldiers to think of this. If we were fighting at our own expense, it would be otherwise. But *quis militat suis stipendiis unquam?*[2] "Who serveth as a soldier at any time at his own charges?" says the Apostle. We have to fight at God's expense: it is for Him to give us the strength, to think of us. The same may be said of the other comparison quoted from the same gospel, of the man who, desiring to erect a sumptuous edifice, sits down first to consider whether he has enough to complete the work, lest he should afterwards become a laughing-stock to others. *Quis ex vobis, volens turrim aedificare, non prius sedens computat sumptus qui necessarii*

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[1] St. Luke xiv. 31. *In aliis Cod. legitur* cogitat.

[2] 1 Cor. ix. 7.

sunt si habeat ad perficiendum, ne posteaquam posuerit fundamentum, et non potuerit perficere, omnes qui vident incipiant illudere ei dicentes, quia hic homo coepit aedificare et non potuit consummare?[1] "For which of you having a mind to build a tower doth not first sit down and reckon the charges that are necessary whether he have withal to finish it, lest after he hath laid the foundation and is not able to finish it, all that see it begin to mock him, saying: This man began to build and was not able to finish?" We are not the master of the work; we are the labourers, who have only to use the materials supplied by God. He who is the master of the edifice will consider if it can be completed. We should therefore become foolish for Christ, which means: Let us work simply for Christ, look only at Christ, have Him for the sole end of our works, then we shall commit foolishness, and we shall be saints.

XLII. Having asked our Lord after holy Mass to be pleased to suggest to me the affection which, during that time after Communion, would be most appropriate, and best calculated to please Him (since I am well aware that at that time I should not discourse through the intellect, but work with the will, neither ought we whilst we have God within us stupidly to seek Him outside us), it seems to me that above all it should be the affection of wonder. Reverence is little, humility is little, thanksgiving is little, love is little. What can the greatest of all wonders more fitly demand than wonder? *Memoriam fecit mirabilium suorum misericors et miserator Dominus, escam dedit timentibus se*:[1] "He hath made a remembrance of His wonderful works, being a merciful and gracious Lord: He hath given food to them that fear Him." God to me! God with me! God in me! What can I do when I think of this, but remain astounded, dead, stupefied? When the soldiers of Holofernes saw the dazzling beauty of Judith, it seems as if they should have been taken by it, and that the first affection which it would have awakened in them would have been great love, so that they would have been inflamed to desire her: but it was not so. The first effect was stupid wonder: *Considerabant faciem ejus, et erat in oculis eorum stupor, quoniam pulchritudinem ejus mirabantur nimis*:[2] "They beheld her face and their eyes were amazed, for they wondered exceedingly at her beauty." For this is the first effect produced by what is great and rare; this afterwards gives place to others. Thus it should be with me. When I consider, not the divine beauty (for that my sight could not endure), but at least the divine goodness towards me, I ought first to wonder. I can afterwards break forth with other affections.

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[1] St. Luke xiv. 28—30.

XLIII. *Cibabis nos pane lacrymarum, et potum dabis nobis in lacrymis in mensura*:[3] "How long wilt Thou feed us with the bread of tears; and give us for our drink tears in measure?" Considering in my prayers this morning how greedy I am of spiritual consolations, sweetness, tears, and recognising in this a good deal of self-love, I made use of the verse mentioned above, asking God to grant them to me so far as He sees necessary, that I may remain constant in His service, and to retain or communicate to others whatever more might cause me to be proud, or produce self-love. But in this very rejection of consolation I experienced greater consolation than before, and more tears, so that I understood how great is my weakness; because when there is much tenderness of affection, a little force of spirit suffices to keep us up, and God seeing in me this lack of the one upholds me by the other. In truth, my tears are, it seems to me, not supernatural, but natural: and such are those which come when I resolve to carry the cross with great constancy, and to mortify myself: because they sometimes proceed from the sensuality of our nature, which becoming alarmed, and being unable to turn us from our fixed purpose, begins to weep and lament over its punishment, as if over an evil without remedy. These tears do not last long, and are not very sweet, neither are those which we beg from God when we aid with our own natural thoughts the affection which God awakes in the heart. Those which flow sweetly and abundantly are those which come of themselves, and sometimes when we least expect them. These increase when we reject them and humble ourselves, because this is done, not with the view of increasing them, but from an upright heart, which is open and straightforward with God. There is clear proof that these proceed from God, because the person himself does not know how they came, and however much he may afterwards try to produce a similar result, he finds himself incapable of doing so.

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[1] Psalm cx. 4, 5. [2] Judith x. 14. [3] Psalm lxxix. 6.

XLIV. I have wished to go so far in my prayer as to reject the consolation which God affords me, asking God to withdraw it, I being a selfish person who only serve Him through relish of such spiritual pleasures, which being so much sweeter and more noble than worldly ones, what wonder is it if I leave these for them? I fancy that God will hear me, and I felt this during the same prayer when I asked it of Him. I seemed to foresee this, for, although before beginning my prayer I had made my usual preparation, I had little disposition for it. I was in aridity, without light, and inept for making an affection of any value. I had indeed a few tears; but these seemed to proceed from my sensuality, which, apprehending, on the one hand, that God would give up consoling me, and on the other, that, notwithstanding this, I am resolved by divine grace to keep it in check, and, in so far as my weakness permits, to mortify it; it seemed to have no longer either heaven or earth, but to hang suspended in the air upon a perpetual cross. Upon this occasion I seemed to understand the meaning of those words: *Quid mihi est in coelo, et a te quid volui super terram?*[1] "For what have I in heaven? and besides Thee what do I desire upon earth?" which, containing a complete renunciation of all heavenly and earthly delights, are exceedingly bitter to a weak heart like mine, which has not yet arrived at valuing God except for His gifts which are not God. These words gave me courage to remain constant, if they have not afforded me comfort.

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[1] Psalm lxxii. 25.

XLV. *Factum est cor meum tamquam cera liquescens in medio ventris mei*:[1] "My heart is become like wax melting in the midst of my bowels." I took these words for my prayer this morning; but what this prayer has been I cannot describe, for it was nothing but weeping from beginning to end: bitter weeping, devoid of sweetness, and very impetuous. It seemed to me therefore to proceed more from my sensibility than from God. I imagined more than ever, that God wishes me to remain upon the cross, internally and externally, and that for me all enjoyment is over: when I tried to comfort myself by saying that I was contented that it should be so, provided that in such a state I should not offend God; I did not seem able to hope this either. I represented to myself all that I do, loaded with sin, all self-love, self-interest, and the numerous faults which I commit. I tried to encourage myself to trust in the divine mercy, but could not do so, having seen how vain it is to promise oneself this in the hour of death unless

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[1] Psalm xxi. 15. See Tirinus on this passage.

God will grant it. I tried to place my heart in God's hands like a liquid heart, according to the words mentioned above, that He might mould it at His will; but neither did I know how to do this; I could only think what the cross must have been which Christ endured for me, if a small part of it was to me so terrible. I found some comfort in those words of St. Paul: *Christo confixus sum cruci*:[1] "With Christ I am nailed to the cross:" and it seemed to me that I should be contented even on the cross, if I were with Christ; but it seemed as if Christ would not remain with me, or would only stay with me as is said in those words, *cum ipso sum in tribulatione*:[2] "I am with him in tribulation," choosing to remain hidden, so that I should feel no comfort from Him. I thought that every prayer I offered to Him was unacceptable to Him, so I said the *Pater noster*, which I thought would please Him, having been dictated by Him, and I repeated again and again those words *Fiat voluntas tua* to encourage me to suffer whatever He pleased. At the conclusion of my prayer I seemed willing to do so by His grace. I turned to the Blessed Virgin; but she seemed to tell me to have patience, that I must suffer a short time, but that I should not cease to have recourse to her in my trials, and that I should bear in mind her sufferings at the foot of the cross. The holy angels, to whom I turned, as I am in the habit of doing after my prayer, seemed to tell me that as I had corresponded so badly to God when He treated me gently, it behoved that He should now try the other path, of mortification; thus they all seemed to promise me the cross. Always in prayer I make a little use of the understanding, but in this one I was unable to do so at all, so I should not have written it down to refer to, as it contains no light, but I thought that some time it might be useful to me.

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[1] Gal. ii. 19.

[2] Psalm xc. 15.

XLVI. *Aruit tamquam testa virtus mea:*[1] "My strength is dried up like a potsherd." I have considered what it means, to become like a piece of broken earthenware, no longer capable of producing even a blade of grass (as that same earth could do in its natural state), devoid of all strength or vigour, exposed to every injury, so that at one blow it can be shattered to pieces, good for nothing but to be thrown away. Christ says that He was reduced to this in His Passion, and to this I must also be reduced. I continued in the same desolation as yesterday, and in the same aridity, though with greater quiet, and few tears; so that I do not know how it was that the hour passed so quickly, but that showed me that I had interior comfort in my suffering, though I was scarcely aware of it.

XLVII. *Et lingua mea adhaesit faucibus meis:*[2] "And my tongue hath cleaved to my jaws." In my meditation upon this subject, I tried to bring myself not to complain of anything untoward which might befall me, to ask nothing, to seek nothing, only to suffer. It seemed to me that this prayer was rendered unquiet on account of the preceding ones, in which I desired to reject any consolation which might come. I think this not a right spirit, because I believe that no disquiet proceeds from God (except by way of permission); but when we have protested to God, that we do not wish to serve Him for such pleasures, and that by His grace we will continue to serve Him with the same ardour and affection if He does not bestow them, we ought promptly to accept every favour from Him, and therefore consolation, when it shall please Him, just as desolation, thanking Him, humbling ourselves, not resting in it as in an end, but accepting it as a means of greater encouragement in His service. If unwillingness to receive the gifts of an earthly lord is great incivility, what would it be towards a heavenly Lord, Who, together with His gifts, makes us worthy to receive them, which earthly masters cannot do? Hence, when humbling myself, as is necessary, upon such an occasion I have fallen into disquiet and trouble, because I seem to have done it from self-love, that is, in order to augment these gifts by this artifice, and, as it were, snatch them from God's hand in greater abundance. If I should wish to contend with the desire, He is wiser than I am. Whereupon, I have endeavoured to quiet myself before God, by humbling myself for not knowing how to humble myself, and I have resolved in future to make fewer reflections, and, leaving the care of me to God, to receive from His hands what He sees fit to bestow. In my heart I seemed to hear Him say this to me, and I said it with my tongue: silence, not to complain, silence, not to ask; but not silence in thanking Him, not silence in accepting His gifts.

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[1] Psalm xxi. 16.

[2] *Ibid.*

XLVIII. My prayer this morning was upon those words of the Psalm, which touched me: *Diviserunt sibi vestimenta mea*:[1] "They parted My garments amongst them," and the following is the light which God gave me: that we wish for His things, but not for Him. If Christ has something which may be of use to us, for our comfort, or our profit, many vie with each other in sharing it; but who is there who wishes for Him naked upon a cross? We wish to divide it amongst us, whilst each may equally possess the whole. O God, I can say this, but I cannot do it. I do not really seem to value those vestments of Christ which only serve for the body: every outward advantage seems to me a small thing to leave for Him, friends, applause, recreation, and all such like things. But those feelings, which are of service to the soul, which adorn it, enrich it, comfort it, as spiritual consolations do, these, it seems to me, are more difficult to renounce; yet even these must be given up, or at least the affection for them, by him who desires God alone.[2]

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[1] Psalm xxi. 19.

[2] This last paragraph, with which the Florentine editor concludes the *Sentimenti*, appears in the "Life" by the same editor, as taken from a private letter of Segneri to a friend. As in the "Life" are found various other parts of similar spiritual letters by Segneri, it was thought well to add them here.

XLIX. I say with great shame that I am a beginner, for no consideration causes me more confusion than to see that I am beginning now, that is, after twenty-three years of religious life completed yesterday:[1] therefore out of all the verses of David which I have for some time endeavoured to practise, I found none which so pierced me through, or touched me to the quick so much as that: *Ego dixi: nunc coepi:* "I said, now have I begun." It was not I myself who decided for me to observe those things,[2] but God Who clearly showed me that He desired this from me. God grant that I may observe them faithfully, for I greatly distrust myself. Therefore your Reverence will not fail to pray for me, for I greatly fear.

L. My dear Father, this is the only thing: to serve God, to be inflamed with His holy love, and to do His holy will with equal pleasure in all things; all else is mere deceit. . . . I candidly confess, that this alone is bitter to me, that I have not hitherto given God even the slightest sign of real love, so that I know not whether I love Him for what He is, or for what He gives.

LI. My present hope is entirely founded on the infallible efficacy of impetration which prayer possesses, when we ask God for what is certainly for our good. What a great saying was that of

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[1] That was December 1, 1660.

[2] The five things mentioned in the Preface to the *Sentimenti*: poverty, retirement, prayer, penance and examination of conscience.

Christ: *Petite, et accipietis:* "Ask and you shall receive." Could He pledge Himself more distinctly, more generally, with less exception? It only remains for us to ask persistently. Is this such a great labour that we cannot undertake it in order to obtain so great good? We have only to ask God, through the merits of His Son, to make us His true servants, His true friends, and then leave it to Him, for He knows well how to find for us some of the many means by which this may be attained. For my part, I have resolved by His grace to attack His ears, and to knock with much importunity. Neither am I disheartened at seeing myself so mean and wretched, and so devoid of all merit: for I ask for alms as a beggar, from God the great Almsgiver. Every one knows that the same merit is not required in a beggar, as is expected in servants and others. His very wretchedness is his merit, and the greater it is, the more reason there is to relieve it. Besides, Christ cannot retract. He has promised, that whoever shall ask perseveringly in His name shall be heard. If we persevere in this the thing is done. *Benedictus Deus, qui non amovit orationem meam et misericordiam suam a me,* said David. "Blessed be God, Who has not removed from me my prayer and His mercy." Upon which words St. Augustine writes: *Cum videris a te non amotam deprecationem tuam, securus esto, quia non est a te amota misericordia ejus.* "When you see that your prayer is not removed from you, be certain that He has not removed His mercy from you." Therefore we are without excuse. Let us ask, importune, be troublesome to God, if we may so say; but this cannot be, because we are then still dearer to Him, and he who asks is not troublesome to Him; but he who will not ask, but says like Achaz: *Non petam*:[1] "I will not ask."

LII. I wish to tell you of a custom of St. Augustine which I read of lately in Osorius, that of discoursing with Jesus Christ one day of the week under one form, another day under another, as I will now describe, but in the manner in which I have carefully adapted it to myself. On Monday to treat with Him as a judge, on Tuesday as a king, on Wednesday as a physician, on Thursday as a spouse, on Friday as a Redeemer, which brings with it the memory of the Passion, on Saturday as a brother, this bringing with it the thought of the Blessed Virgin, on Sunday as the glorifier, this being connected with the thought of Paradise. In this way we can succeed in conversing with Him each day in prayer under one of the above-named titles, describing ourselves now as wicked, now as a subject, or as sick, etc., asking Him for the requisite graces, and stirring up suitable affections: during the remainder of the day the mind can in this manner easily continue united with God.

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[1] Isaias vii. 12.

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